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Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Florida FSA Newsletter

Florida Farm Service Agency

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USDA Implements up to \$2.36 Billion to Help Agricultural Producers Recover after 2017 Hurricanes and Wildfires

'2017 Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program' to Aid Recovery in Rural Communities

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will make disaster payments of up to \$2.36 billion, as provided by Congress, to help America's farmers and ranchers recover from hurricanes and wildfires. The funds are available as part of the new 2017 Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program (2017 WHIP). Sign-up for the new program, authorized by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, will begin no later than July 16.

USDA's [Farm Service Agency](#) (FSA) will make these disaster payments to agricultural producers to offset losses from hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria and devastating wildfires. The 2017 calendar year was a historic year for natural disasters, and this investment is part of a broader suite of programs that USDA is delivering to rural America to aid recovery. In total, the Act provided more than \$3 billion in disaster relief by creating new programs, and expediting or enhancing payments for producers.

About 2017 WHIP Disaster Payments

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Please contact your local FSA Office for questions specific to your operation or county.

The new 2017 WHIP will provide significant disaster assistance and be guided by the following principles:

- Eligibility will be limited to producers in counties that experienced hurricanes or wildfires designated as presidentially-declared disasters in 2017;
- Compensation determined by a producer's individual losses rather than an average of losses for a particular area (where data is available);
- Producers who purchased higher levels of risk protection, such as crop insurance and noninsured crop disaster assistance program, will receive higher payments;
- Advance payments up to 50 percent; and
- A requirement that payment recipients obtain future risk protection.

Other USDA Disaster Assistance

WHIP disaster payments are being issued in addition to payments through our traditional programs, some of which obtained increased funding or had amendments made by the Act to make the programs more responsive, including the [Emergency Conservation Program](#), [Emergency Watershed Protection Program](#), [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program](#), [Tree Assistance Program](#) and [Livestock Indemnity Program](#).

During 2017, the U.S. experienced a historic year of weather-related disasters, with an economic impact totaling more than \$300 billion. In total, the United States was impacted by 16 separate billion-dollar disaster events including: three tropical cyclones, eight severe storms, two inland floods, a crop freeze, drought and wildfire. More than 25 million people – almost eight percent of the population – were affected by major disasters.

More Information

FSA will distribute more information on how producers can file claims for WHIP disaster payments at a later date. For questions on how to establish farm records to be prepared when WHIP disaster signup begins, or to learn about other disaster assistance programs, producers are asked to contact their [local USDA service center](#).

Citrus Tree and Fruit Growers Need to Make Insurance Decisions Soon

USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) reminds Florida citrus tree and fruit growers that the final date to apply for crop insurance coverage is April 15. Current policyholders who wish to make changes to their existing coverage also have until the April 15 sales closing date to do so.

Federal crop insurance is critical to the farm safety net. It helps producers and owners manage revenue risks and strengthens the rural economy. Coverage is available for avocado trees and mango trees in **Miami-Dade** County. Coverage is also available for carambola trees in **Lee and Miami-Dade** counties; for lemon trees in **Hendry, Martin, and St. Lucie** counties; for lime trees in **Lee and Miami-Dade** counties; and for grapefruit trees and orange

trees in select Florida counties.

Coverage is also available for grapefruit, mandarins, oranges, tangelos, tangerines, and tangors in select Florida counties; for lemons in **Hendry and Martin counties**; and for limes in **Lee and Miami-Dade counties**. Please contact your insurance agent to see if your county is covered.

Growers are encouraged to visit their crop insurance agent soon to learn specific details for the 2019 crop year. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the RMA Agent Locator. Growers can use the RMA Cost Estimator to get a premium amount estimate of their insurance needs online.

For more information about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net, visit www.rma.usda.gov.

New NAP Policy Approved by the STC

The Florida STC determined that anyone who has filed a Notice of Loss for two consecutive years is subject to Growing Season Inspection (GSI) for the current crop year. Farmers impacted by the policy have 10 days from the last day of planting their NAP crop to make an acreage report with the local FSA Office. COC's are instructed to deny all requests for NOL for anyone who fails to comply with the policy. The COC's shall cite the following CFR Part 1437.10 and FSA Handbook 1-NAP par 51A as the authority to deny benefits.

Acreage devoted to value loss crops is subject to GSI however, it is not subject to the 10 day acreage reporting rule.

NOTE: For 2018 only, farmers who have already completed planting their NAP crops and are impacted by this policy have 10 days from notification of the policy to report their acreages.

Still Time to be Counted in the 2017 Census of Agriculture

NASS to follow-up with producers who have not yet responded

Farmers and ranchers still have time to be counted in the 2017 Census of Agriculture, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). Although the first deadline has just passed, NASS will continue to accept Census information through the spring to get a complete and accurate picture of American agriculture that represents all farmers and ranchers.

Federal law mandates that everyone who received the 2017 Census of Agriculture questionnaire complete it and return it even if not currently farming. NASS will continue to follow-up with producers through the spring with mailings, phone calls, and personal visits. To avoid these additional contacts, farmers and ranchers are encouraged to complete their Census either online at www.agcounts.usda.gov or by mail as soon as possible. Responding online saves time by skipping sections that do not apply and automatically calculating totals. The online questionnaire is accessible on desktops, laptops, and mobile devices.

For more information about the 2017 Census of Agriculture, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov. For questions or assistance filling out the Census, call toll-free (888) 424-7828.

Livestock Inventory Records

Producers are reminded to keep updated livestock inventory records. These records are necessary

in the event of a natural disaster.

When disasters strike, the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) can assist producers who suffered excessive livestock death losses and grazing or feed losses due to eligible natural disasters.

To participate in livestock disaster assistance programs, producers will be required to provide verifiable documentation of death losses resulting from an eligible adverse weather event and must submit a notice of loss to their local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is apparent. For grazing or feed losses, producers must submit a notice of loss to their local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent and should maintain documentation and receipts.

Producers should record all pertinent information regarding livestock inventory records including:

- Documentation of the number, kind, type, and weight range of livestock
- Beginning inventory supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts;

For more information on documentation requirements, contact your local FSA office.

USDA Helps Cotton Producers Maintain, Expand Domestic Market

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is taking action to assist cotton producers through a Cotton Ginning Cost Share (CGCS) program in order to expand and maintain the domestic marketing of cotton.

The sign-up period for the CGCS program runs from March 12, 2018, to May 11, 2018.

Under the program, which is administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA), cotton producers may receive a cost share payment, which is based on a producer's 2016 cotton acres reported to FSA multiplied by 20 percent of the average ginning cost for each production region.

The CGCS payment rates for each region of the country are:

Region Rate	States	Cost of Ginning Per Acre	CGCS Payment
Southeast	Alabama, Florida , Georgia N. Carolina, S. Carolina, Virginia	\$116.05	\$23.21
Mid-South	Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana Missouri, Mississippi, Tennessee	\$151.97	\$30.39
Southwest	Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas	\$98.26	\$19.65
West	Arizona, California, New Mexico	\$240.10	\$48.02

CGCS payments are capped at \$40,000 per producer. To qualify for the program, cotton producers must meet conservation compliance provisions, be actively engaged in farming and have adjusted gross incomes not exceeding \$900,000. FSA will mail letters and pre-filled applications to all eligible

cotton producers.

The program was established under the statutory authority of the Commodity Credit Corporation Charter Act.

To learn more about the CGCS program, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/cgcs or contact a local FSA county office. To find your local FSA county office, visit the USDA's new website: <https://www.farmers.gov/>.

Youth Loans

The Farm Service Agency makes loans to youth to establish and operate agricultural income-producing projects in connection with 4-H clubs, FFA and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is \$5000.

Youth Loan Eligibility Requirements:

- Be a citizen of the United States (which includes Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) or a legal resident alien
- Be 10 years to 20 years of age
- Comply with FSA's general eligibility requirements
- Be unable to get a loan from other sources
- Conduct a modest income-producing project in a supervised program of work as outlined above
- Demonstrate capability of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. The project supervisor must recommend the youth loan applicant, along with providing adequate supervision.

Stop by the county office for help preparing and processing the application forms.

Beginning Farmer Loans

FSA assists beginning farmers to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:

- Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years
- Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm
- Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA
- Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's average size farm.

Additional program information, loan applications, and other materials are available at your local USDA Service Center. You may also visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).