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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 Approves Emergency Forest Restoration Assistance for 17 Florida Counties

Florida USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) has approved 17 counties to accept applications for the Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) to address hurricane damages. Impacted producers in Bay, Calhoun, Dixie, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Lafayette, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Taylor, Wakulla, Walton and Washington are eligible to apply for EFRP.

EFRP provides payments to eligible owners of nonindustrial private forest (NIPF) land to enable the owners to carry out emergency measures to restore land damaged by a natural disaster. EFRP sign-up began on October 23, 2018, and ends on December 21, 2018.

After applications are received Florida Forest Service will provide technical assistance by evaluating the damage and developing a plan to restore the NIPF land. The local FSA county committee will determine land eligibility and approve applications.

Administrative Officer

Mark Cotrell

Farm Program

Tom Hockert

Farm Loans

Justin Teuton

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

In order to meet eligibility requirements, NIPF land must have existing tree cover or had tree cover immediately before the natural disaster occurred and be sustainable for growing trees. The land must also be owned by any nonindustrial private individual, group, association, corporation or other private legal entity that has definitive decision-making authority over the land. The natural disaster must have resulted in damage that if untreated would impair or endanger the natural resources on the land and/or materially affect future use of the land.

In Florida, the requirement of an onsite inspection prior to beginning debris removal activities has been waived due to extensive hurricane damage.

For more information on EFRP, please contact your local FSA county office or visit <https://www.farmers.gov/recover>. To find your local office, visit [farmers.gov](https://www.farmers.gov).

USDA Reminds Producers of Disaster Program Deadlines

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).

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds Florida producers who experienced losses from natural disasters during the 2017 and 2018 calendar years that they may be eligible for assistance through the Tree Assistance Program (TAP), Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) and Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP).

Tree Assistance Program (TAP): TAP provides financial assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines lost due to natural disasters. Payment eligibility is triggered when a mortality loss in excess of 15 percent on a stand (adjusted for normal mortality) occurs due to natural disaster.

In addition, up to \$15 million is available to eligible pecan orchardists or pecan nursery tree growers for certain mortality losses incurred during 2017. To be eligible, the grower must have suffered a mortality loss on a stand in excess of 7.5 percent, but less than 15 percent, adjusted for normal mortality from Jan. 1, 2017, through Dec. 31, 2017.

For 2017 and 2018 TAP losses, and 2017 Pecan TAP losses, growers have until the later of Dec. 3, 2018, or 90 calendar days after the disaster event or date when the loss of trees becomes apparent to submit an application with supporting documentation.

Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP): ELAP provides emergency assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybees and farm-raised fish who have suffered losses due to an adverse weather or loss condition, including blizzards, disease, water shortages and wildfires. ELAP assistance is provided for losses not covered by other disaster assistance programs.

For 2017 and 2018 ELAP, producers must file a notice of loss and application for payment at their local FSA office by Dec. 3, 2018. for losses occurring from Oct. 1, 2016, through Sept. 30, 2018.

Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP): LIP provides compensation to eligible livestock owners or contract growers for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality, or injury resulting in reduced value, caused by an eligible loss condition.

For 2017 and 2018 LIP, a livestock owner or contract grower must file a notice of loss the later of 30 calendar days from when the loss of livestock is first apparent, or Dec. 3, 2018. For 2017 losses, a livestock owner or contract grower must file an application for payment by Dec. 3, 2018. For 2018 losses, a livestock owner or contract grower must file an application for payment by, March 1, 2019.

Other Amendments to the 2014 Farm Bill by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 In February, the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 made several changes to FSA disaster programs. This includes eliminating the \$20 million fiscal year funding cap for ELAP, eliminating the \$125,000 payment limitation for LIP for 2017 and future years and allowing producers to receive a payment for injured livestock that are sold for a reduced price due to an eligible event.

As a result of these changes, starting June 4, producers were allowed to submit ELAP, LIP and LFP applications for 2017 losses if they reached the payment limitation under the previous rules. The application periods for these programs for the 2017 program year will close on Dec. 3, 2018. Producers who already submitted applications and received decisions on their applications for these years do not need to file again but can reapply if they have additional losses or their application or notice of loss was denied because it was late filed.

Contact your local FSA office for program deadlines. For more information on FSA disaster assistance programs or to find your local USDA Service Center, visit <https://www.farmers.gov/>.

Sign in/Sign up!

Farmers, ranchers and agricultural producers have new online options to access U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs. Through USDA's new streamlined process, producers doing business as an individual can now register, track and manage their applications for the Market Facilitation Program (MFP) and 2017 Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program (2017 WHIP) on the secure and convenient www.farmers.gov. USDA eAuthentication does not have the mechanism to issue login accounts to businesses, corporations, other entities, or for anyone acting on behalf of another individual or entity. Producers, doing business as an individual, first need to sign up for Level 2 eAuthentication access.

- Step 1: Create an online account at www.eauth.usda.gov
- Step 2: Complete identity verification by either using the online self-service identity verification method or by completing the identity verification in-person at your USDA Service Center.
- Step 3: Contact your local USDA Service Center to have your new Level 2 account linked with your USDA customer record
- Step 4: You're enrolled and ready to log in

Users with a secure Level 2 eAuthentication ID, linked to their USDA customer record, can apply for select USDA programs, view and print farm maps and farm records data. Enrolling is easy! Visit farmers.gov/sign-in to learn more.

To locate a service center near you or use online services not requiring eAuthentication access, visit www.farmers.gov. For technical assistance, call the eAuthentication help desk at 1-800-457-3642.

Changing Bank Accounts

FSA program payments are issued electronically into your bank account. In order to make timely payments, you need to notify your FSA servicing office if you close your account or if your bank information is changed for whatever reason (such as your financial institution merging or being purchased). Payments can be delayed if FSA is not notified of changes to account and bank routing numbers.

For some programs, payments are not made until the following year. For example, payments for crop year 2017 through the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage program aren't paid until 2018. If the bank account was closed due to the death of an individual or dissolution of an entity or partnership before the payment was issued, please notify your local FSA office as soon as possible to claim your payment.

USDA and SCORE Joining Forces to Find Mentors

If you are a farmer or rancher, or have agricultural or business experience, join us in supporting the next generation and in investing in your local community! Your experiences and knowledge as a business owner, agricultural professional, or farmer can provide vital support to the community you live in.

USDA is collaborating with SCORE – www.score.org - the nation's largest network of volunteer, expert business mentors in an effort to expand the field of available agricultural mentors and provide free business mentoring to farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural and rural business owners. SCORE is currently looking for volunteers with experience in an agriculture-related field who would like to become a part of an extended field of volunteers. The organization's Orientation and Mentoring Certification program provides volunteers with everything needed to be a successful volunteer. Training includes background about SCORE's mission and services, as well as guidance on how to be a business mentor, including enhancement of listening, interviewing and problem-solving skills.

Current SCORE volunteer mentors have backgrounds in finance, accounting, marketing, operations, business and financial planning. The mentors provide local expertise and free one-on-one business mentoring to new and existing farmers and business owners. Together they work through the process of starting up or maintaining agricultural and rural businesses. No matter what stage a business is in, SCORE volunteer mentors can help in developing business plans, navigating financing and legal issues, identifying new markets, and other topics, in order to help their clients succeed. FSA invites you to learn more and sign up to become a mentor today at <https://newfarmers.usda.gov/mentorship>.

FSA Encourages Farmers and Ranchers to Vote in County Committee Elections

The 2018 Farm Service Agency County Committee Elections began on Nov. 5, when ballots were mailed to eligible voters. The deadline to return the ballots to local FSA offices is Dec. 3, 2018.

County committee members are an important component of the operations of FSA and provide a link between the agricultural community and USDA. Farmers and ranchers elected to county committees help deliver FSA programs at the local level, applying their knowledge and judgment to make decisions on commodity price support programs; conservation programs; incentive indemnity and disaster programs for some commodities; emergency programs and eligibility. FSA committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws.

To be an eligible voter, farmers and ranchers must participate or cooperate in an FSA program. A person who is not of legal voting age but supervises and conducts the farming operations of an entire farm, may also be eligible to vote.

Eligible voters in local administrative areas up for election who do not receive a ballot can obtain one from their local USDA Service Center. Dec. 3, 2018, is the last day for voters to submit ballots in person to local USDA Service Centers. Ballots returned by mail must also be postmarked no later than Dec. 3. Newly elected committee members will take office Jan. 1, 2019.

More information on county committees, such as the new 2018 fact sheet, can be found on the FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov/elections or at a local USDA Service Center.

Loan Servicing

There are options for Farm Service Agency loan customers during financial stress. If you are a borrower who is unable to make payments on a loan, contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager to learn about the options available to you.

Disaster Set-Aside (DSA) Program

FSA borrowers with farms located in designated primary or contiguous disaster areas who are unable to make their scheduled FSA loan payments should consider the Disaster Set-Aside (DSA) program.

DSA is available to producers who suffered losses as a result of a natural disaster and is intended to relieve immediate and temporary financial stress. FSA is authorized to consider setting aside the portion of a payment/s needed for the operation to continue on a viable scale.

Borrowers must have at least two years left on the term of their loan in order to qualify.

Borrowers have eight months from the date of the disaster designation to submit a complete application. The application must include a written request for DSA signed by all parties liable for the debt along with production records and financial history for the operating year in which the disaster occurred. FSA may request additional information from the borrower in order to determine eligibility.

All farm loans must be current or less than 90 days past due at the time the DSA application is complete. Borrowers may not set aside more than one installment on each loan.

The amount set-aside, including interest accrued on the principal portion of the set-aside, is due on or before the final due date of the loan.

For more information, contact your local FSA farm loan office. To find your local office, visit farmers.gov.

Dates to Remember

Nov 22

Federal Holiday Observed. Offices Closed.

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