

June 2015



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Wisconsin FSA Newsletter

Wisconsin Farm Service Agency

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Please contact your [local FSA Office](#) for questions specific to your operation or county.

Message from the State Director

Hello - It is hard to believe that June is coming to an end and July is right around the corner. In June we saw a lot of activity with hay being harvested and spring planted crops and small grains continuing to grow and mature.

In this month's electronic newsletter, please find information pertaining to the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) enrollment period and the upcoming 2016 Margin Protection Program – Dairy signup.

Staff within our FSA offices continue to remain busy assisting producers with acreage reporting. Your assistance and understanding during the reporting process is greatly appreciated.

On July 8, local FSA offices will be hosting an Open House for individuals who may be interested in serving on county committees. For more information, please contact your local FSA service center.

Thank you for your work. Please do not hesitate to contact me or a member of your local FSA team if you have any questions or comments.

Report 2015 Spring Seeded Crops by July 15th (Appointments Required)

In order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements, all producers are encouraged to visit their local FSA office to file an accurate crop acreage report by the applicable deadline.

Acreage reporting dates vary by crop and by county so please contact your local FSA office for a list of county-specific deadlines. In Wisconsin, the crop reporting date for most annual crops is July 15th. Perennial forages and fall seeded small grains have an acreage reporting deadline of November 15th.

The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the applicable acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the applicable acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.
- If a perennial forage crop is reported with the intended use of “cover only,” “green manure,” “left standing,” or “seed,” then the acreage must be reported by July 15th. Perennial forage and fall seeded small grains with other intended uses must be reported by November 15th.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP covered crops is the earlier of the applicable dates in your policy or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

Appointments are required. For questions regarding crop certification and crop loss reports, or to make your appointment, please contact your local FSA office.

Enrollment Period for Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) Safety-Net Programs Underway

Producers in ARC-PLC Must Annually Enroll Through 2018

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced that eligible producers with farms participating in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs through 2018, may now formally enroll those farms in the 2014 and 2015 annual programs. The enrollment period began June 17, 2015, and will end Sept. 30, 2015.

The new programs, established by the 2014 Farm Bill, trigger financial protections for agricultural producers when market forces cause substantial drops in crop prices or revenues. More than 1.76 million farmers have elected ARC or PLC. Previously, 1.7 million producers had enrolled to receive direct payments (the program replaced with ARC and PLC by the 2014 Farm Bill). This means more farms have elected ARC or PLC than enrolled under previously administered programs

Many producers don't realize all that was done this past spring at the local FSA office was to make determinations on bases and yields and to select a program – ARC or PLC – for all eligible farms in their operation. Starting this year through 2018, producers in the program now have to sign contracts annually as was done with the DCP program in the past. The deadline to enroll for 2014-2015 is September 30th. Producers should contact their local FSA office to set up an appointment to enroll farms for which they elected for ARC or PLC this past spring.

ARC and PLC Acreage Maintenance

Producers enrolled in Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) are reminded that they must protect all cropland and noncropland acres on the farm from wind and water erosion and noxious weeds. Producers who sign ARC county or individual contracts and PLC contracts agree to effectively control noxious weeds on the farm according to sound agricultural practices. If a producer fails to take necessary actions to correct a maintenance problem on a farm that is enrolled in ARC or PLC, the County Committee may elect to terminate the contract for the program year.

A list of noxious weeds can be found on the following website: <http://plants.usda.gov/java/noxiousDriver>.

Secretary Vilsack Announces Additional 800,000 Acres Dedicated to Conservation Reserve Program for Wildlife Habitat and Wetlands

Secretary Hails Program's 30th Anniversary, Announces General Signup Period

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that an additional 800,000 acres of highly environmentally sensitive land may be enrolled in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) under certain wetland and wildlife initiatives that provide multiple benefits on the same land.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will accept new offers to participate in CRP under a general signup to be held Dec. 1, 2015, through Feb. 26, 2016. Eligible existing program participants with contracts expiring Sept. 30, 2015, may be granted an option for one-year extensions from June 22 through August 28, 2015 if the fields still meet the cover requirements. Farmers interested in removing sensitive land from agricultural production and planting grasses or trees to reduce soil erosion, improve water quality and restore wildlife habitat are encouraged to enroll.

For 30 years, the Conservation Reserve Program has helped farmers prevent more than 8 billion tons of soil from eroding, reduce nitrogen and phosphorous runoff relative to cropland by 95 and 85 percent respectively, and even sequester 43 million tons of greenhouse gases annually, equal to taking 8 million cars off the road.

The voluntary Conservation Reserve Program allows USDA to contract with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive land is conserved. Participants establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat. In return, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years.

CRP protects water quality and restores significant habitat for ducks, pheasants, turkey, quail, deer and other important wildlife which spurs economic development like hunting and fishing, outdoor recreation and tourism across rural America. The recent announcement allows an additional 800,000 acres for duck nesting habitat and other wetland and wildlife habitat initiatives to be enrolled in the program.

Farmers should consider the various CRP continuous sign-up initiatives that may help target specific resource concerns. Financial assistance is offered for many practices including conservation buffers and pollinator habitat plantings, and initiatives such as the highly erodible lands, bottomland hardwood tree and longleaf pine.

Farmers may visit their FSA county office for additional information. The 2014 Farm Bill authorized the enrollment of grasslands in CRP and information on grasslands enrollment will be available after the regulation is published later this summer.

For more information on CRP and other FSA programs, please visit www.fsa.usda.gov or contact your local FSA office.

CRP Maintenance is Required

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has a long history in Farm Service Agency (FSA) and many producers may refer to it as a set aside program. CRP is not a set it and forget it, type program. Maintenance of these acres is the producer's responsibility as each contract receives a maintenance payment as part of the annual rental payment per acre.

In order to maintain eligibility to continue in the program, CRP contracts require the producer to maintain the approved cover and control invading woody vegetation, weeds, and other pests. The options available to you and the timing are critical. Not paying attention to these requirements can cost you money, can cause you to lose your contract, and can cause you to be ineligible for future participation.

Producers are allowed to conduct any spot mowing, spraying, or other treatments before or after the nesting season without approval of the FSA office; however, generic/cosmetic weed control is not allowed at any time! We are currently in the primary nesting season, which runs from May 15 to August 1. If you notice a weed problem before the end of the current primary nesting season, you must contact your administrating FSA office for approval before any spot treatment may begin.

Local County FSA offices also conduct annual spot checks of CRP contracts. CRP participants are required by contract to maintain the approved cover on your CRP fields for the entire contract length or violations will be assessed. Violations will result in monetary loss of annual payments and/or termination of acres in violation. Terminations will result in full repayment of all annual rental/cost share/incentive payments and liquidated damages.

Maintenance is a very serious issue and can affect future program eligibility. All CRP participants agreed to conduct maintenance on their contract throughout the contract period. Be sure you comply. You will be rewarded with even greater wildlife use of your property! If you have any questions concerning maintenance requirements, or actions you can take without causing a violation, contact the local FSA office before completing any maintenance activities.

Signup for the 2016 Margin Protection Program for Dairy Begins July 1

All dairy producers who elected to participate in 2015 Margin Protection Program (MPP) are obligated to participate in MPP through 2018 with at least the \$4.00 catastrophic (CAT) level of coverage. The signup period for the 2016 coverage runs from July 1 through September 30, 2015. All outstanding premium balances for 2015 must be paid in full before signing up for 2016 coverage. New dairy producers should contact the local FSA office to find out their options for participating in the 2016 program.

The MPP-Dairy Program offers protection to dairy producers when the difference (the margin) between the all-milk price and national average feed cost falls below a certain producer selected amount. Dairy producers currently in the program must purchase coverage for their dairy operation by paying an annual administrative fee of \$100 which includes the \$4.00 catastrophic coverage level. Producers have the option to select higher coverage levels up to \$8.00, in \$0.50 increments, and a desired coverage percentage level ranging from 25 to 90 percent, in 5 percent increments.

To assist producers in determining the best coverage levels for their operation, an online decision tool is available at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mpptool> or the local UW-Extension Ag Agent can help. Once producers have determined which level of coverage they would like for 2016, they need contact their local FSA office to set up an appointment to sign up for 2016 coverage before the September 30th deadline.

USDA Offers Wisconsin Farmers Immediate Disaster Assistance

Farm Service Agency Stands Ready to Assist Agricultural Producers Impacted by Natural Disasters

Wisconsin Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds farmers across the state of federal farm program benefits that may be available to help eligible producers recover from natural disasters.

FSA offers disaster assistance and low-interest loan programs to assist agricultural producers in their recovery efforts following qualifying natural disasters. Available programs and loans include:

- **Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)** - provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops (includes native grass for grazing) when low yields, loss of inventory, or prevented planting occurred due to natural disasters. Eligible producers must have purchased NAP coverage for 2015 crops.
- **Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)** - offers payments to eligible producers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather. Eligible losses may include those determined by FSA to have been caused by hurricanes, floods, blizzards, wildfires, tropical storms, tornados, lightning, extreme heat, and extreme cold. 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.
- **Tree Assistance Program (TAP)** – provides assistance to eligible orchardists and nursery tree growers for qualifying tree, shrub, and vine losses due to natural disaster. Applications for assistance must be filed no later than 90 days after the disaster event.
- **Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)** - provides emergency relief for losses due to feed or water shortages, disease, adverse weather, or other conditions, which are not adequately addressed by other disaster programs. ELAP covers physically damaged or destroyed livestock feed that was purchased or mechanically harvested forage or feedstuffs intended for use as feed for the producer's eligible livestock. In order to be considered eligible, harvested forage must be baled; forage that is only cut, raked, or windrowed is not eligible. Producers must submit a notice of loss to their local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent. For beekeepers, ELAP covers colony and beehive (the physical structure) losses in instances where the hive has been destroyed by a natural disaster including flooding, high winds, and tornadoes.
- **Emergency Loan Program** – Available to producers with agriculture operations located in a county under a primary or contiguous Secretarial Disaster designation. These low interest loans help producers recover from production and physical losses due to drought or flooding.
- **Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)** - provides emergency funding for farmers to rehabilitate land severely damaged by natural disasters; including fence loss.
- **HayNet** - is an Internet-based Hay and Grazing Net Ad Service allowing farmers to share 'Need Hay' ads and 'Have Hay' ads online. Farmers also can use another feature to post advertisements for grazing land, specifically ads announcing the availability of grazing land or ads requesting a need for land to graze. www.fsa.usda.gov/haynet.

To establish or retain FSA program eligibility, farmers must report prevented planting and failed acres (crops and grasses). Prevented planting acreage must be reported on form FSA-576, Notice of Loss, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and Risk Management Agency (RMA).

For more information on disaster assistance programs and loans visit www.fsa.usda.gov/ or contact your local FSA Office. To find your local FSA county office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Low-Interest Direct Farm Loans Can Help Producers Start or Expand Farms

FSA offers direct farm ownership and direct farm operating loans to producers who want to establish, maintain or strengthen their farm or ranch. FSA loan officers process, approve, and service direct loans.

Farmers interested in expanding their existing operation or starting a new operation should check out the direct farm ownerships loans available with FSA. Direct farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, enlarge an existing farm, construct and repair buildings, and make farm improvements.

Direct farm operating loans can be used to purchase livestock and feed, farm equipment, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance, and other costs, including family living expenses. Operating loans can also be used to finance minor improvements or repairs to buildings and to refinance some farm-related debts, excluding real estate.

The maximum loan amount for both direct farm ownership and operating loans is \$300,000 and a down payment is not required. Repayment terms vary depending on the type of loan, collateral, and the producer's ability to repay the loan. Operating loans are normally repaid within seven years and farm ownership loans are not to exceed 40 years. For information on monthly interest rates, click here.

New farmers, military veterans, and underserved farmers (minorities and women) also are encouraged to apply. Each year Congress targets 80 percent of available loan funds to beginning and targeted underserved farmers.

For more information about farm loans, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans, or contact your local FSA office. To find your local FSA county office, visit <https://offices.usda.gov>.

Guaranteed Loan Program

FSA guaranteed loans allow lenders to provide agricultural credit to farmers who do not meet the lender's normal underwriting criteria. Farmers apply for a guaranteed loan through a lender, and the lender arranges for the guarantee. FSA can guarantee up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan. Guaranteed loans can be used for both farm ownership and operating purposes.

Guaranteed farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, construct or repair buildings, develop farmland to promote soil and water conservation, or to refinance debt.

Guaranteed farm operating loans can be used to purchase livestock, farm equipment, feed, seed, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance, and other operating expenses.

FSA can guarantee farm ownership and operating loans up to \$1,392,000. Repayment terms vary depending on the type of loan, collateral, and the producer's ability to repay the loan. Operating loans are normally repaid within seven years and farm ownership loans are not to exceed 40 years.

Please contact your lender or local FSA farm loan office for more information on guaranteed loans.

Please Share Your Contact Information – Cell Phone - Email Address

If you no longer have a landline (home telephone) please provide your local FSA office with your cell phone number in case they need to give you a call.

Also, please let them know your e-mail address so that they can send you monthly Bulletins and newsletters. This is the only way FSA can get important updated program information to you. Due to budget constraints, FSA is only printing and mailing a paper newsletter when budget allows.

It would be a great help to your local office if you could bring this to the attention of fellow producers when you are talking with them. Thanks!!!!

Save Time – Make an Appointment with FSA

To ensure the maximum use of your time and that you are afforded our full attention to your important business needs, please call your local FSA office in advance to set up an appointment before your visit. For local FSA Service Center contact information, please visit: <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>.

Important Dates to Remember

July 3rd - - - - - Offices closed in observance of Independence Day

July 15th - - - - -Deadline to timely file a 2015 acreage report on spring planted crops

August 3 - - - - -Deadline for nominations for the local FSA County Committee election

August 28 - - - - - Deadline to request one-year extension of CRP contracts expiring 9-30-15

September 30 - - Deadline to enroll in 2014 & 2015 ARC-PLC program

September 30 - - Deadline to pick 2016 coverage level for Margin Protection Program for Dairy

Ongoing

Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) enrollment

Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program applications

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. 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 Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).