

December 2015



Having trouble viewing this email? [View it as a Web page.](#)

- [Important Dates to Remember](#)
- [Conservation Reserve Program Signup #49 Underway at FSA](#)
- [Snowmobiles Trails on CRP Acreage Need Prior Approval](#)
- [Enrollment Period for 2016 USDA ARC-PLC Safety Net Coverage Underway](#)
- [Consider a Low-Interest Crop Loan on your Stored Harvested 2015 Grain](#)
- [Short on Farm Storage?](#)
- [New Program Connects Farmers to More Resources That Benefit Their Operation](#)
- [USDA to Provide Agricultural Credit Training, Expand Opportunities for Farmer Veterans and Beginning Farmers](#)
- [Loans for Targeted Underserved Producers](#)
- [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybee, and Farm-Raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#)
- [Livestock Indemnity Program \(LIP\)](#)

Wisconsin FSA Newsletter

Wisconsin Farm Service Agency

8030 Excelsior Dr,
Suite 100
Madison, WI 53717

www.fsa.usda.gov/wi

State Committee:

Bill Averbeck - Chair
Patty Edelburg
George Huber

State Executive Director:

Warren Hanson (Acting)

Division Chiefs:

Tom Brandt
Russell Raeder
Warren Hanson

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

<http://offices.usda.gov>.

Important Dates to Remember

Dec. 1.....General CRP signup #49 began - ends Feb. 26, 2016
Dec. 7.....Signup for 2016 ARC-PLC began – ends Aug. 1, 2016
Dec. 25...Offices closed in observance of Christmas Holiday
Jan. 1.....Offices closed in observance of New Year Holiday
Jan. 14....Deadline to apply for NAP buy-up loss coverage on perennial and value loss crops
Jan. 18....FSA offices closed due to observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.
Jan. 30....Deadline to apply for livestock loss assistance under Livestock Indemnity Program
Feb. 2.....Deadline to timely file 2015 acreage report for maple sap
Feb. 15...Offices closed in observance of Washington's Birthday
Mar. 15....Deadline to apply for 2015 NAP coverage on spring planted crops

Ongoing:

- Continuous Conservation Reserve program enrollment,
- Farm Storage Facility Loan program applications,
- Advance notification and approval of any planned ditching, tiling, or land clearing,
- Farm Loan applications,
- Informing local office of any changes to farm ownership or operation, email address, bank account, phone number, etc.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Conservation Reserve Program Signup #49 Underway at FSA

December 26, 2015 Marks 30th Anniversary for the Nation's Most Successful Voluntary Conservation Program

Local FSA offices are currently holding a general enrollment period for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) that began Dec. 1, 2015, and ends on Feb. 26, 2016. Dec. 26, 2015 also marks the 30th anniversary of CRP, a federally funded program that assists agricultural producers with the cost of restoring, enhancing and protecting certain land by establishing grasses, shrubs and trees to improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and reduce loss of wildlife habitat.

As of Sept. 2015, 24.2 million acres were enrolled in CRP nationwide. CRP also is protecting more than 170,000 miles of streams through riparian forest and grass buffers, which is enough to go around the world 7 times. For an interactive tour of CRP success stories from across the United States, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/CRPis30, or follow on Twitter at #CRPis30.

Participants in CRP establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as "covers") to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat on marginally productive agricultural lands. In return, FSA provides participants with annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish those covers. At times when commodity prices are low, enrolling sensitive lands in CRP can be especially attractive to farmers, as it softens the economic hardship for landowners while at the same time providing ecological benefits. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years depending on the cover enrolled. The long-term goal of the program is to re-establish native plant species on marginal agricultural lands for the primary purpose of preventing soil erosion and improving water quality and related benefits of improving wildlife habitat.

Eligible producers: must have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months prior to Feb. 26, 2016. Some exceptions may apply.

Eligible practices: Grass & legume establishment, native grass cover establishment, tree and hardwood plantings, permanent wildlife habitat corridors, wildlife food plots (must be offered with another practice), rare and declining habitat, pollinator habitat, and others.

Eligible land: must be cropland that is planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity for four of six crop years from 2008 to 2013, and that is physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity. It must also **meet one** of the following criteria:

- It must have a weighted average erosion index of eight or higher,
- be enrolled in a CRP contract that is expiring on Sept. 30, 2016, or
- be located in a national or state CRP conservation priority area.

For more information FSA conservation programs, make an appointment to visit your local FSA office or www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation. To find your local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Snowmobiles Trails on CRP Acreage Need Prior Approval

Local Farm Service Agency County Committees (COC) determine whether or not snowmobile trails are allowed to cross acreage enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). If snowmobile use affects your CRP acreage, contact your local FSA office to request this particular use. This is an annual request by the CRP participant, not the snowmobile club. Approval must be granted **before** allowing a trail on your CRP contract acreage. COC's may require participants to pay for a field visit or assess a payment reduction to ensure the cover is not destroyed by the permitted snowmobile use. If the cover is destroyed, the CRP participant is required to re-establish that cover at their own expense.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Enrollment Period for 2016 USDA ARC-PLC Safety Net Coverage Underway

Producers who chose coverage from the safety net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill, known as the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, can now begin scheduling appointments at their local FSA offices to enroll in coverage for 2016. The enrollment period began Dec. 7, 2015 and will continue through Aug. 1, 2016.

Although the choice between ARC and PLC was completed earlier this year and remains in effect through 2018, producers must still enroll their farm by signing a contract each year to receive coverage.

If a farm is not enrolled during the 2016 enrollment period, producers on that farm will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs.

The two programs were authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill and offer a safety net to agricultural producers when there is a substantial drop in prices or revenues for covered commodities. Covered commodities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, safflower seed, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat. For more details regarding these programs, go to www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.

For more information, producers are encouraged to visit their local FSA office. To find a local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Consider a Low-Interest Crop Loan on your Stored Harvested 2015 Grain

FSA is now accepting requests for 2015 [Marketing Assistance Loans \(MALs\)](#) for all eligible commodities after harvest. Marketing Assistance Crop Loans provide producers interim financing after harvest to help them meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows.

Eligible crops include wheat, feed grains, soybeans and other oilseeds, pulse crops, wool and honey.

Interest rates for 9-month 2015 crop year loans are announced monthly. **The interest rate is 1.375% for loans disbursed in December.** The national loan rates for 2015 crops are \$1.95/bu for corn, \$5.00/ bu for soybeans, and \$1.94/bu for winter wheat. Local loan rates vary by county.

Producers will need to certify or provide evidence of their harvested production. Loans are calculated using the certified bushels, not to exceed the county committee established maximum yields per acre, times the local county loan rate. Monthly spot-checks are conducted to ensure the quantity and quality of the crop being stored.

Maintaining the Quality of Farm-Stored Loan Grain

Bins are ideally designed to hold a level volume of grain. When bins are overfilled and grain is heaped up, airflow is hindered and the chance of spoilage increases. Producers who take out marketing assistance loans and use the farm-stored grain as collateral should remember that they are responsible for maintaining the quality of the grain through the term of the loan.

Unauthorized Disposition of Grain

If loan grain has been disposed of through feeding, selling or any other form of disposal without prior written authorization from the county office staff, it is considered an unauthorized disposition. The financial penalties for unauthorized dispositions are severe. A producer's name will be placed on a loan violation list for a two-year period. Always call before you haul any grain under loan. For more details contact your local FSA office (<http://offices.usda.gov>).

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Short on Farm Storage?

USDA has a program to help producers build or upgrade feed and grain farm-storage facilities for producers determined to be short of storage. The Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program provides very low-interest financing to assist producers with the construction or rehabilitation of storage structures.

The maximum amount of a loan through the FSFL program is \$500,000 per structure with FSA loaning on up to 85% of the eligible costs. The interest rate in effect at the time the loan is approved is locked in for the life of the loan. December interest rates vary from 2.00% for 7-year loans, 2.25% for 10-year, and 2.375% for 12-year loans.

The program is designed to help ensure that producers have adequate capacity to store their harvested production until they feed or sell the harvested crop. The low-interest funds can be used to build or upgrade permanent facilities to store commodities. Eligible commodities include grains, oilseeds, pulse crops, hay, honey, renewable biomass commodities, fruits, vegetables, and milk. Qualified facilities include bunkers, flat storage, hay barns, grain bins, silos and oxygen limiting structures, grain drying and handling facilities, along with cold storage facilities for fruits and vegetables, and bulk tanks for milk.

An FSFL needs to be approved **BEFORE** any site preparation or construction can begin. FSFL security requirements have been eased for loans between \$50,000 and \$100,000. Previously, all loans in excess of \$50,000 required a promissory note and additional security, such as a lien on real estate. Now loans up to \$100,000 can be secured by only a promissory note, unless the structure has no re-sale value, then additional collateral is still required.

Anyone interested in an FSFL needs to contact their local FSA office at least six weeks prior to any planned construction to allow for loan processing. All loans require a \$100 non-refundable loan application fee. Please feel free to contact your local FSA office if you have any questions.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

New Program Connects Farmers to More Resources That Benefit Their Operation

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has launched a new service called Bridges to Opportunity that connects farmers and ranchers to services beyond the traditional USDA programs and loans.

This new software application offered through the FSA County Office provides FSA employees access to state, regional and national programs and services designed to enhance FSA programs. The service benefits all farmers by offering additional support for disaster assistance, grants, technical help, financial advice, educational courses, and a wide array of other information to help them grow their operation.

To learn more about Bridges to Opportunity and how it can help, contact your local FSA County Office representative. You may also visit the [FSA website](#) for more information.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

USDA to Provide Agricultural Credit Training, Expand Opportunities for Farmer Veterans and Beginning Farmers

USDA announced a partnership with the Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC) to conduct agricultural credit training sessions in the Midwest for military veterans and beginning farmers and ranchers. States under consideration to host the workshops include Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, and Nebraska.

These workshops will provide individuals interested in farming as a career, including military veterans, with methods to improve business planning and financial skills, and improve understanding of the risk management tools that can help small farm operations.

Other partners include Niman Ranch, a community network of more than 700 independent family farmers and ranchers, and the Farm Credit Council and the Farm Credit System, which provides loans, leases and financial services to farmers, ranchers and rural businesses across the United States. The workshops will also include assistance with credit applications and introductions to local or regional food markets.

To learn more about veterans in agriculture, visit www.usda.gov/veterans. Visit www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans or your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office to learn more about FSA's farm loan programs. To find your local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>. More information also is available from the Farmer Veteran Coalition at www.farmvetco.org.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Loans for Targeted Underserved Producers

FSA has a number of loan programs available to assist applicants to begin or continue in agriculture production. Loans are available for operating, purchasing, or improving farms.

While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, FSA has provided priority funding for members of targeted underserved populations.

A targeted underserved applicant is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of his or her identity as members of the group without regard to his or her individual qualities. For purposes of this program, targeted underserved groups are women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybee, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)

The Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) provides emergency assistance to eligible livestock, honeybee, and farm-raised fish producers who have losses due to disease, adverse weather or other conditions, such as blizzards and wildfires, not covered by other agricultural disaster assistance programs.

Eligible livestock losses include grazing losses not covered under the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP), loss of purchased feed and/or mechanically harvested feed due to an eligible adverse weather event, additional cost of transporting water because of an eligible drought, and additional cost associated with gathering livestock to treat for cattle tick fever.

Eligible honeybee losses include loss of purchased feed, cost of additional feed purchased above normal quantities, colony losses in excess of normal mortality, including CCD, and hive losses due to eligible adverse weather.

Eligible farm-raised fish losses include death losses in excess of normal mortality and/or loss of purchased feed due to an eligible adverse weather event.

Producers who suffer eligible livestock, honeybee, or farm-raised fish losses from Oct. 1, 2015 to Sept. 30, 2016 must file:

- A notice of loss, the earlier of 30 calendar days of when loss is apparent or by Nov. 1, 2016
- An application for payment by Nov. 1, 2016

To view these and other FSA program fact sheets, visit the FSA fact sheet web page at www.fsa.usda.gov/news-room/fact-sheets/index.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to eligible producers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law. LIP compensates livestock owners and contract growers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather, including losses due to hurricanes, floods, blizzards, wildfires, extreme heat or extreme cold.

For 2015, eligible losses must occur on or after Jan. 1, 2015, and before Dec. 31, 2015. A notice of loss must be filed with FSA within 30 days of when the loss of livestock is apparent. Participants must provide the following supporting documentation to their local FSA office no later than 30 calendar days after the end of the calendar year for which benefits are requested:

- Proof of death documentation
- Copy of growers contracts
- Proof of normal mortality documentation

USDA has established normal mortality rates for each type and weight range of eligible livestock, i.e. Adult Beef Cow = 1.5% and Non-Adult Beef Cattle (less than 400 pounds) = 3%. These established percentages reflect losses that are considered expected or typical under "normal" conditions. Producers who suffer livestock losses in 2015 must file both of the following:

- A notice of loss, the earlier of 30 calendar days of when loss is apparent or by Jan. 30, 2016
- An application for payment by Jan. 30, 2016.

Additional information about LIP is available at your local FSA office or online at: www.fsa.usda.gov

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

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 or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).
