

August 2017



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

# NEWSLETTER

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## Hawaii & Pacific Basin State FSA Newsletter

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#### USDA Announces Signup for the 2017 Reimbursement Transportation Program

##### *Program Helps Offset Cost for Farmers and Ranchers Outside the Contiguous U.S.*

The Reimbursement Transportation Cost Payment Program (RTCP) for fiscal year 2017 began on July 17, 2017, and will end on September 8, 2017.

The 2014 Farm Bill reauthorized RTCP, which offsets a portion of the costs of transporting agricultural products over long distances. The program allows farmers and ranchers in Alaska, Hawaii and insular areas including the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Virgin Islands of the United States, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Republic of Palau, to recover any transportation costs.

This program helps U.S. farmers and ranchers outside the 48 contiguous states who are at a competitive disadvantage when transporting agriculture products to market.

RTCP payments are calculated based on the costs incurred for transportation of the agricultural commodity or inputs during a fiscal year, subject to an \$8,000 per producer cap per fiscal year. In the event that claims for payments exceed the

## Upcoming County Meetings:

Hawaii County Committee  
October 13, 2017 at 8:30 am

Honolulu County Committee  
September 15, 2017 at 3:00 pm

Maui County Committee  
September 21, 2017 at 8:30 am

Kauai County Committee  
August 23, 2017 at 9:00 am

Guam County Committee  
October 4, 2017 at 10:00 am

CNMI County Committee  
October 11, 2017 at 10:00 am

To find contact information for your local office [click here](#).

funds available from the program for a fiscal year, payments will be reduced on a pro-rata basis.

For more information on RTCP, farmers and ranchers in the eligible areas can visit their administrative FSA county office or the FSA website at [www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport). To find your local FSA county office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

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## Disaster Assistance Programs

The annual limitation of \$125,000 applies to the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP), Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) and Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP). The total payments received under ELAP, LFP and LIP may not exceed \$125,000. A separate limitation of \$125,000 applies to Tree Assistance Program (TAP) payments. There is also a separate \$125,000 payment limit for the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP).

Payment limitations also apply to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs. Contact your local NRCS office more information.

For more information on FSA payment limitations by program, visit [https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/FactSheets/2015/payment\\_eligibility\\_payment\\_limitations.pdf](https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/FactSheets/2015/payment_eligibility_payment_limitations.pdf).

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## Elections for the 2017 County Committee

Elections for the USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Hawaii State County offices and Guam County Committees are underway.

It is important that every eligible producer participate in these elections because FSA county committees are a link between the agricultural community and the USDA. The 2017 election will be conducted for the following representatives in the Local Administrative Area's (LAA) outlined below:

- Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands County – LAA #3 - Farm/ranch land located in Tinian.
- Guam County – LAA #3 - Farm/ranch land located in South Guam, parts of Yona (south of Route 17), Santa Rita, Agat, Umatac, Merizo, Inarajan and Talafofo.
- Hawaii County – LAA #1 - Farm/ranch land located in the Puna and Kau District.
- Honolulu County – LAA #2 - Farm/ranch land located on the Windward side of the island. Starting from the north end of Waimanalo up to the northern tip of Kahuku.
- Kauai County – LAA #1 - Farm/ranch land located in Niihau, Waimea, Koloa and up to Lihue.
- Maui County – LAA #2 - Farm/ranch land located on the island of Maui, south and south west of Kuihelani Highway, Hana Highway, Haleakala Highway and Kekaulike Avenue. It includes the communities of Kula, Omaopio, Kihei, Pukalani, Ulupalakua, Kanaio, Kahikinui, Kaupo and Kipahulu.

County committee members are a critical component of FSA operations. Committees should be comprised of members who reflect the diversity of producers involved in production agriculture in their respective County. This means that producers representing underserved groups or communities should be on the committee to speak on behalf of their constituency.

Underserved producers are beginning, women and other minority farmers and ranchers and land owners and/or operators who have limited resources. Other minority groups including Native American and Alaska Natives; persons under the poverty level, and persons that have disabilities are also considered underserved.

County committee election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters on November 6, 2017. The last day to return completed ballots is December 4, 2017.

For more information on eligibility to serve on FSA county committees, visit: [www.fsa.usda.gov/elections](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/elections).

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## **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 due to an eligible adverse weather event, cost of additional feed purchased above normal quantities due to an eligible adverse weather condition, colony losses in excess of normal mortality due to an eligible weather event or loss condition, 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, 2016 to Sept. 30, 2017 must file:

- A notice of loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent or by Nov. 1, 2017
- An application for payment by Nov. 1, 2017

The Farm Bill caps ELAP disaster funding at \$20 million per federal fiscal year.

The following ELAP Fact Sheets (by topic) are available online:

- ELAP for Farm-Raised Fish Fact Sheet
- ELAP for Livestock Fact Sheet
- ELAP for Honeybees Fact Sheet

To view these and other FSA program fact sheets, visit the FSA fact sheet web page at [www.fsa.usda.gov/factsheets](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/factsheets).

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## USDA Microloans Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is offering farm ownership microloans, creating a new financing avenue for farmers to buy and improve property. These microloans are especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming, and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations.

The microloan program has been hugely successful, providing more than 16,800 low-interest loans, totaling over \$373 million to producers across the country. Microloans have helped farmers and ranchers with operating costs, such as feed, fertilizer, tools, fencing, equipment, and living expenses since 2013. Seventy percent of loans have gone to new farmers.

Now, microloans will be available to also help with farm land and building purchases, and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate loans to help farmers strengthen their operations. Microloans provide up to \$50,000 to qualified producers, and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

To learn more about the FSA microloan program visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans), or contact your local FSA office.

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### August 2017 Interest Rates

Farm Operating Loans 2.75%

Farm Operating Microloans 2.75%

Farm Ownership Loans 3.75%

Farm Ownership Microloans 3.75%

Farm Ownership Loans Direct Down Payment for Beginning Farmer or Rancher 1.5%

Emergency Loans 5.625%

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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).