

October 2017



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Hawaii & Pacific Basin State FSA Newsletter

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USDA Processing Pending Conservation Reserve Program Continuous Enrollment Offers

Acceptance of Most 2018 Offers Temporarily Suspended

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will process many pending eligible offers for land enrollment in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), and will temporarily suspend accepting most new offers until later in the 2018 fiscal year.

All current, eligible CRP continuous enrollment offers made through Sept. 30, 2017, except for those made under the Pollinator Habitat Initiative (CP42), will be approved. Additionally, FSA is temporarily suspending acceptance of most offers going forward to provide time to review CRP allocation levels, and to avoid exceeding the statutory cap of 24 million acres.

The CRP acreage cap is a provision of the 2014 Farm Bill. Current enrollment is about 23.5 million acres nationwide. USDA is accepting all pending continuous enrollment offers that were made beginning on May 4, 2017, and extending through Sept. 30, 2017,

Chief, Farm Loan Program:
Steve Bazzell

Upcoming County Meetings:

Hawaii County Committee
January 12, 2018 at 8:30 am

Honolulu County Committee
November 17, 2017 at 3:00 pm

Maui County Committee
November 16, 2017 at 8:30 am

Kauai County Committee
November 15, 2017 at 9:00 am

Guam County Committee
December 6, 2017 at 10:00 am

CNMI County Committee
December 13, 2017 at 10:00 am

[Click Here](#) to find contact information for your local FSA County office.

except Pollinator Habitat Initiative offers. Pollinator acreage offers are being declined because the program has met its acreage enrollment goal. Effective immediately, USDA is suspending acceptance of all new CRP continuous offers received or submitted after Sept. 30, 2017. The suspension will continue until later in the 2018 fiscal year.

However, FSA will continue to accept eligible offers for state-specific Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and CRP Grasslands enrollment. Offers received on or after Oct. 1, 2017, are subject to fiscal year 2018 rental rates which have been adjusted to reflect current market conditions and were established after careful review of the latest USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) cash rent data.

In return for enrolling in CRP, USDA, through FSA, provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Landowners enter into contracts that last between 10 and 15 years. CRP pays farmers and ranchers who remove sensitive lands from production and plant certain grasses, shrubs and trees that improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and increase wildlife habitat. Payment totals for 2017 were announced earlier this week totaling over \$1.6 billion.

For more information about CRP, contact your local FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov/crp. To locate your local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Environmental Review Required Before Project Implementation

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires Federal agencies to consider all potential environmental impacts for federally-funded projects before the project is approved.

For all Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs, an environmental review must be completed before actions are approved, such as site preparation or ground disturbance. These programs include, **but are not limited to**, the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program and farm loans. If project implementation begins before FSA has completed an environmental review, this will result in a denial of the request. There are exceptions regarding the Stafford Act and emergencies. It is important to wait until you receive written approval of your project proposal before starting any actions, including, but not limited to, vegetation clearing, site preparation or ground disturbance.

Remember to contact your local FSA office early in your planning process to determine what level of environmental review is required for your program application so that it can be completed timely.

Applications cannot be approved contingent upon the completion of an environmental review. FSA must have copies of all permits and plans before an application can be approved.

USDA Seeks Applications for Grants to Help Agricultural Producers and Small Rural Businesses Develop New Products

The USDA Rural Development (RD) is accepting applications for grants to help farmers, ranchers and producer-based businesses nationwide develop new product lines.

The funding is being provided through the Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program. VAPG grants can be used to develop new products from raw agricultural products or promote new markets for established products. Veterans, socially-disadvantaged groups, beginning farmers and ranchers, operators of small and medium-sized family farms and ranches and farmer and rancher cooperatives are given special priority.

The deadline to submit paper applications is Jan. 31, 2018. Electronic applications submitted through grants.gov are due Jan. 24, 2018. For more information on this grant program, visit [USDA Rural Development](http://USDA.RuralDevelopment). For assistance in your region please [click here](#) for our office locator website.

Elections for the 2017 County Committee

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) County Committee Elections are underway throughout the state of Hawaii and Guam County.

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 throughout Hawaii State and Guam County will be conducted for the following representative Local Administrative Areas (LAA):

- 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 Nov. 6, 2017. The last day to return completed ballots to your local County USDA service center is Dec. 4, 2017.

Communication is Key in Lending

Farm Service Agency (FSA) is committed to providing our farm loan borrowers the tools necessary to be a success. A part of ensuring this success is providing guidance and counsel from the loan application process through the borrower's graduation to commercial lending institutions. While it is FSA's commitment to advise borrowers as they identify goals and evaluate progress, it is crucial for borrowers to communicate with their farm loan staff when changes occur. It is the borrower's responsibility to alert FSA to any of the following:

- Any proposed or significant changes in the farming operation;
- Any significant changes to family income or expenses;
- The development of problem situations;
- Any losses or proposed significant changes in security

In addition, if a farm loan borrower cannot make payments to suppliers, other creditors, or FSA on time, contact your farm loan staff immediately to discuss loan servicing options.

For more information on FSA farm loan programs, visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

October 2017 Interest Rates

Farm Operating Loans 2.75%

Farm Operating Microloans 2.75%

Farm Ownership Loans 3.625%

Farm Ownership Microloans 3.625%

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

Emergency Loans 3.75%

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).