

December 2017



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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North Dakota FSA eNews

North Dakota Farm Service Agency

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State Executive Director:
Brad Thykeson

Greetings from the State Executive Director- Brad Thykeson

Recently, I began the exciting journey of serving you as the North Dakota Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Executive Director. I am honored to work for you all-who are involved in ND production agriculture, and provide the food, fiber and fuel that consumers depend on every day.

State Committee (STC):

Marcy Svenningsen, Chairperson
Todd Hall, Member
Lynn Jacobson, Member
Marie Marshall, Member
Lucy Matejcek, Member

State Office Staff:

Administrative Officer
Russell Bubach
Compliance/Payment Limitations
Wanda Braton
Conservation/Livestock
Brad Olson
ARC/PLC/NAP/Disaster
Laura Heinrich
Farm Loan Programs
Ryan Lindbom
Price Support
Brian Haugen

Find Your Local Office:

<http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>

I would like to extend a thank you to Brian Haugen who served in an acting role, until my appointment was made. Brian did an excellent job keeping everything up and running and is making my transition smooth.

I was born and raised on the same farm I reside on now, on the eastern side of Steele County. My wife Karla and I have three children Greg (Samantha), Ross (Amber) and Stephani (Lucas) Teske. We also have been blessed with 6 grandchildren.

I have been farming for 35 years in Steele County and more recently in Barnes County as well. I farmed for 25 years of that time alongside my dad and now farm with my two sons. Watching my sons take the reins while I start my service here, is something I am very proud of.

With a new upcoming farm bill and constant changes in our industry, it is my best intent to help all ND farmers, ranchers and landowners understand what we are all about and how we can help. My sister once said, if you ever talk to Brad and you don't understand his passion for agriculture, you are not listening very well. My farming background and time serving with the North Dakota Grain Growers Association, will follow me in my work here. I am confident you will see how sincere my passion is for the betterment of ND Agriculture.

This month, there are a few items I would like to highlight and remind FSA customers:

- The deadline for submitting **FSA County Committee Election ballots** is **today December 4, 2017**.
- Signup for the 2018 ARC/PLC safety net program has begun.
- If you receive a NASS Crop survey, it is very important to take the time to complete and return!
- As you begin to review financials and make decisions for 2018, communication with ag lenders is important. The weather and commodity prices are out of your control in a tightening farm economy. Please remember there are options out there for those in a low spot, and FSA can be a part of that plan.
- If you are thinking about a Marketing Assistance Loan (MAL) on any crops for the 2017 calendar year, please contact your county office to start that process.

I hope you enjoy the last month of 2017 and have a safe and warm Holiday Season!

- **Brad Thykeson**

North Dakota Producers Reminded of Approaching Deadline to Submit Ballots for Farm Service Agency County Committee Elections

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) State Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds farmers, ranchers and other agricultural producers that FSA county committee elections began Nov. 6, with the mailing of ballots. Eligible voters must return ballots to their local FSA offices by **Dec. 4, 2017**, to ensure that their vote is counted. Producers who have not received their ballot should pick one up at their local FSA office.

Ballots returned by mail must be postmarked no later than Dec. 4, 2017. Newly elected committee members will take office Jan. 1, 2018.

Nearly 7,700 FSA county committee members serve FSA offices nationwide. Each committee has three to 11 elected members who serve three-year terms of office. One-third of county committee seats are up for election each year. County committee members apply their knowledge and judgment to help FSA make important decisions on its commodity support programs, conservation programs, indemnity and disaster programs, and emergency programs and eligibility.

Producers must participate or cooperate in an FSA program to be eligible to vote in the county committee election. Approximately 1.5 million producers are currently eligible to vote. Farmers and ranchers who supervise and conduct the farming operations of an entire farm, but are not of legal voting age, also may be eligible to vote.

For more information, visit the FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov/elections. You may also contact your local USDA service center or FSA office. Visit <http://offices.usda.gov> to find an FSA office near you.

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Marketing Assistance Loans

USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation makes available nonrecourse marketing assistance loans on certain crop year 2017 commodities. These loans can be requested by mail, via fax, or in person by properly completing the loan application (CCC-666). Loan applications are available at all county FSA offices and online at: <http://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov/eForms/>

Producer's intending to receive a commodity loan disbursement prior to calendar year-end must contact your local County Office in early December to schedule an appointment.

A commodity loan application must be filed at the county office that maintains the farm records for the farm that produced the commodity for the loan. The 2017 crop commodity loan rates are available at any county FSA office, or online at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov> and clicking on the "Price Support" link.

To be eligible for loan the commodity must meet the applicable commodity definition in the Official United States Standards and specific commodity eligibility requirements for a nonrecourse loan.

Farm-stored loans are available in approved storage structures that provide safe storage for the commodity through the maturity date of the loan.

Warehouse-stored loans are also available at CCC-approved storage warehouses or State licensed warehouses which have been assigned a CCC warehouse code. Proof of storage paid through the loan maturity date and proof of payment of in-charges must be provided with the warehouse receipt for the warehouse stored loan.

Loans mature on demand, but no later than the last day of the ninth calendar month after the month in which the loan was disbursed.

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Farm Storage Facility Program

The Farm Storage Facility Loan Program (FSFL) allows producers of eligible commodities to obtain low-interest financing to build or upgrade on-farm storage and handling facilities. The maximum principal amount of a loan through FSFL is \$500,000. Participants are required to provide a down payment of 15 percent, with CCC providing a loan for the remaining 85 percent of the eligible net cost of the storage facility and permanent drying and handling equipment. FSA requires additional security for all loans exceeding \$100,000 or when the aggregate amount of FSFL loans exceeds

\$100,000. Loan terms of 3, 5, 7, 10 or 12 years are available depending on the amount of the loan and loan type. Interest rates for each term rate may be different and are based on the rate which CCC borrows from the Treasury Department. Sign-up for the FSFL program is continuous throughout the year. All requests for FSFL prior to loan approval require a site inspection for an environmental assessment in accordance to National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) requirements showing no adverse impacts. FSFL policy requires the following actions cannot occur at the proposed FSFL location prior to the environmental assessment being completed:

- accepting delivery of equipment and/or materials in previously undisturbed areas
- site preparation or foundation construction in previously undisturbed areas
- no alteration to any structures that are 50 years old or older or within a historic district

If any of the above are completed prior to FSA completing the on-site assessment may impede the completion of the environmental assessment and eligibility for the FSFL.

For more information about FSFL please visit your FSA county office or www.fsa.usda.gov.

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USDA to Measure Final 2017 Row Crop Production and Grain Stocks with Two End-of-Year Surveys

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is encouraging producers to respond to two upcoming surveys – the December Agricultural Survey and the County Agricultural Production Survey – that are critical to row crop producers around the country. The results of the surveys help determine the structure of the 2017 farm payment and risk management programs administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency and Risk Management Agency.

The County Agricultural Production Survey was sent to 170,000 row crop producers beginning Nov. 3. Responses are due by Jan.15, 2018, and NASS will publish county-level results for corn, soybeans, sunflowers, and sorghum on Feb. 22, 2018, in the Quick Stats database. These county-level data are critical for USDA farm payment determinations.

The December Agricultural Survey will go to 84,000 producers beginning Nov. 29. Responses are due by Dec. 21, 2017, and NASS publishes results in the Crop Production 2017 Summary report on Jan. 12, 2018. Information collected in this survey also feeds into the county estimates for row crops. The survey also asks about grain stocks stored on-farm.

When producers receive the surveys, they have the option to respond using the secure online questionnaire or return it by mail. NASS safeguards the privacy of all respondents and publishes only aggregate data, ensuring that no individual operation or producer can be identified.

These and all NASS data are available online at www.nass.usda.gov/Publications and the searchable [Quick Stats database](#). Watch a video on how NASS data are used at www.youtube.com/watch?v=rBW-g1FgLNs.

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Controlled Substance

Program participants convicted under federal or state law of any planting, cultivating, growing, producing, harvesting or storing a controlled substance are ineligible for program payments and benefits. If convicted of one of these offenses, the program participant shall be ineligible during that crop year and the four succeeding crop years for price support loans, loan deficiency payments,

market loan gains, storage payments, farm facility loans, Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program payments or disaster payments.

Program participants convicted of any federal or state offense consisting of the distribution (trafficking) of a controlled substance, at the discretion of the court, may be determined ineligible for any or all program payments and benefits:

- for up to 5 years after the first conviction
- for up to 10 years after the second conviction
- permanently for a third or subsequent conviction

Program participants convicted of federal or state offense for the possession of a controlled substance shall be ineligible, at the discretion of the court, for any or all program benefits, as follows:

- up to 1 year upon the first conviction
- up to 5 years after a second or subsequent conviction

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Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Risk Management Agency (RMA) to Prevent Fraud, Waste, and Abuse

FSA supports the RMA in the prevention of fraud, waste and abuse of the Federal Crop Insurance Program. FSA has been, and will continue to, assist RMA and insurance providers by monitoring crop conditions throughout the growing season. FSA will continue to refer all suspected cases of fraud, waste and abuse directly to RMA. Producers can report suspected cases to the county office staff, the RMA office or the Office of the Inspector General.

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Livestock Indemnity Program – Deadlines Nearing

The deadline to file an application for 2017 Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) is **January 30, 2018**.

Producers who suffered livestock deaths due to adverse weather from January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017 may submit a notice of loss and application for payment with their local FSA County Office by the January 30, 2018 deadline. Eligible adverse weather events include, but are not limited to, earthquake, hail, lightning, tornado, winter storm (lasting 3 consecutive days with high winds, freezing rain/sleet, heavy snowfall and extremely cold temperatures), floods, blizzards, wild fires, extreme heat, extreme cold, anthrax, straight-line winds, and cyanobacteria (blue-green algae poisoning) that directly results in the death of eligible livestock in excess of normal mortality.

For 2017 livestock deaths, the notice of loss **MUST** have been filed with the local FSA office within 30 calendar days from when the loss was apparent. Livestock producers suffering livestock losses may submit the notice of loss by phone, fax, and email or in person.

Livestock producers must provide proof of death and inventory numbers of eligible livestock that died due to an eligible adverse weather event. The inventory numbers represent the number of eligible livestock before and after the adverse weather event(s) that cause the death of the livestock. Beginning and ending inventory documents can include, veterinary records, balance sheets, inventory numbers used for tax purposes, loan records, sales and purchase records and other similar documents. Proof of death documentation may be rendering truck receipts, FEMA records, veterinary records, private insurance documents, contemporaneous records that existed at the time of the weather event(s), pictures with a date, and other similar documents.

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Livestock Forage Losses

Producers with land physically located in the following counties are eligible to apply for 2017 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) benefits on small grain for grazing, native pasture, improved pasture, forage sorghum for grazing:

Adams, Billings, Bottineau, Bowman, Burke, Burleigh, Dickey, Divide, Dunn, Emmons, Golden Valley, Grant, Hettinger, Kidder, LaMoure, Logan, McHenry, McIntosh, McKenzie, McLean, Mercer, Morton, Mountrail, Oliver, Pierce, Renville, Sheridan, Sioux, Slope, Stark, Ward and Williams.

LFP provides compensation to eligible livestock producers who suffer grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land or fire on federally managed land.

Eligible livestock producers must complete a CCC-853 and the required supporting documentation no later than January 30, 2018 for 2017 losses.

Additional Information about LFP, including eligible livestock and fire criteria, is available at your local FSA office or online at: www.fsa.usda.gov.

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CRP

Currently, FSA County Offices can only accept offers to enroll land into CRP Grasslands or ND Riparian CREP II. All county offices can accept offers for CRP Grasslands, but only producers in the following counties can submit offers for CREP II: Adams, Billings, Bowman, Burleigh, Dunn, Emmons, Golden Valley, Grant, Hettinger, McKenzie, Mercer, Morton, Oliver, Sioux, Slope and Stark.

However, even though FSA cannot accept offers for other CRP practices, we encourage producers to visit with the local FSA Office to learn more about the various options/practices to address conservation resource concerns. At this time it is not known when FSA can begin accepting offers for enrollment into other CRP practices, so it would be prudent to gain some knowledge on what requirements must be met, what management activities must be conducted, etc, prior to being able to submit an offer. Producers and landowners should also visit with NRCS to see what options are available for certain parcels of land, such as whether or not a tree planting would meet the resource concern, or re-storing the hydrology of a wetland, or installing a sod water-way to control erosion. All these things can/should be discussed before an offer is submitted. Once it is learned that FSA can accept offers for the other CRP practices, it will be announced in this newsletter and other media sources.

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Update Your Records

FSA is cleaning up our producer record database. If you have any unreported changes of address, zip code, phone number, email address or an incorrect name or business name on file they need to be reported to our office. Changes in your farm operation, like the addition of a farm by lease or purchase, need to be reported to our office as well. Producers participating in FSA and NRCS programs are required to timely report changes in their farming operation to the County Committee in writing and update their CCC-902 Farm Operating Plan.

If you have any updates or corrections, please call your local FSA office to update your records.

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USDA Announces Enrollment Period for Safety Net Coverage in 2018

FSA today announced that starting Nov. 1, 2017, farmers and ranchers with base acres in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) safety net program may enroll for the 2018 crop year. The enrollment period will end on Aug. 1, 2018.

Since shares and ownership of a farm can change year-to-year, producers must enroll by signing a contract each program year.

The producers on a farm that are not enrolled for the 2018 enrollment period will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs for the 2018 crop should crop prices or farm revenues fall below the historical price or revenue benchmarks established by the program. Producers who made their elections in previous years must still enroll during the 2018 enrollment period.

The ARC and PLC 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, long grain rice, medium grain rice (which includes short grain and sweet rice), safflower seed, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat. Upland cotton is no longer a covered commodity. 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>

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

USDA is partnering 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.

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Bank Account Changes

Current FSA policy mandates that payments be electronically transferred into your bank account. In order for timely payments to be made, producers need to notify the FSA county office if your account has been changed or if another financial institution purchases your bank. Payments can be delayed if the FSA office is not aware of updates to your account and routing numbers.

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Feeling Overwhelmed? FirstLink Offers Resources to Help

Help is available if you, or someone you know, is in need of emotional support as a result of farm stress. You are not alone and help is as easy as dialing 2-1-1. The FirstLink Helpline provides confidential listening and support on a variety of topics, including financial assistance and mental health support. For help, or to connect to available resources, dial the 24-hour helpline at 2-1-1 or 701-235-7335 (SEEK). The 24-Hour Suicide Lifeline is 800-273-8255 (TALK). Find FirstLink online at <http://myfirstlink.org/services/2-1-1-helpline/>.

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Calendar Deadlines

Important Upcoming Dates and Deadlines

****December 4, 2017:** Deadline for Producers to return their County Committee Election Ballots to their local County FSA office to ensure their vote is counted for

Now through August 1, 2018: 2018 ARC/PLC annual signup period

December 15, 2017: Deadline to complete registration and coverage election for MPP-Dairy

December 25, 2017: USDA Service Center Closed for Christmas Day

January 1, 2018: USDA Service Center Closed for New Year's Day

January 30, 2018: Last Day to apply for 2017 Livestock Forage Program (LFP)

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December 2017 Loan and Interest Rates

Commodity Loans – **2.500%**

Operating Loans – **2.875%**

Farm Ownership and Conservation Loans – **3.750%**

Farm Ownership-Joint Financing – **2.500%**

Emergency - Amount of Actual Loss - **3.750%**

Farm Ownership-Down Payment Loans – **1.500%**

Farm Storage Facility Loan, 3-Year – **1.750%**

Farm Storage Facility Loan, 5-Year – **2.000%**

Farm Storage Facility Loan, 7-Year – **2.250%**

Farm Storage Facility Loan, 10-Year – **2.375%**

Farm Storage Facility Loan, 12-Year – **2.375%**

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