

September 2016



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Georgia State FSA Newsletter

**Georgia
State Farm
Service Agency**

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USDA Climate Hub Building Block: Conservation of Sensitive Lands

USDA Climate Hubs are working with producers, ranchers, pasture and forest landowners to effectively partner in ways to help reduce climate change. To aid in this partnership, USDA established the 10 Building Blocks for Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry.

One such Building Block is the “Conservation of Sensitive Lands”. The term “sensitive lands” denotes soils and landscapes that are valuable due to properties (e.g., high organic matter, wet hydrology) and/or function (e.g., wildlife habitat, filtration, and hydrologic storage). Typical examples of these soils are organic rich histosols, floodplains, or wetlands along riparian areas. Properties and functions of these soils are easily disrupted from agricultural or urban land use.

Sensitive lands that are used for agricultural production can be protected by changes in land use (long-term cover). This reduction in land use intensity can provide multiple environmental benefits, including substantial GHG mitigation that occurs as carbon is sequestered or preserved in soils and vegetation. When land is removed from crop production, several activities—including

Dianne
Westmoreland

tillage, nitrogen fertilization, and energy use—are substantially reduced or eliminated, generating additional GHG mitigation.

Farm Loan Chief:
David Laster

FSA and NRCS are committed to identifying these sensitive lands and encouraging landowners, farmers, and ranchers to voluntarily adopt conservation systems--using financial and technical assistance--to generate GHG benefits. To read more about Conservation of Sensitive Lands, click the following link:

Farm Program Chief:
Brett Martin

http://www.usda.gov/oce/climate_change/building_blocks/4_SensitiveLands.pdf

**Public Affairs/
Outreach:**
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For more information about the USDA Climate Hubs click here:

<http://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/>

To find contact information for your local office go to www.fsa.usda.gov/ga

USDA Offers New Loans for Portable Farm Storage and Handling Equipment

Portable Equipment Can Help Producers, including Small-Scale and Local Farmers, Get Products to Market Quickly

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will provide a new financing option to help farmers purchase portable storage and handling equipment. The loans, which now include a smaller microloan option with lower down payments, are designed to help producers, including new, small and mid-sized producers, grow their businesses and markets.

The program also offers a new "microloan" option, which allows applicants seeking less than \$50,000 to qualify for a reduced down payment of five percent and no requirement to provide three years of production history. Farms and ranches of all sizes are eligible. The microloan option is expected to be of particular benefit to smaller farms and ranches, and specialty crop producers who may not have access to commercial storage or on-farm storage after harvest. These producers can invest in equipment like conveyers, scales or refrigeration units and trucks that can store commodities before delivering them to markets. Producers do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply.

Earlier this year, FSA significantly expanded the list of commodities eligible for Farm Storage Facility Loan. Eligible commodities now include aquaculture; floriculture; fruits (including nuts) and vegetables; corn, grain sorghum, rice, oilseeds, oats, wheat, triticale, spelt, buckwheat, lentils, chickpeas, dry peas sugar, peanuts, barley, rye, hay, honey, hops, maple sap, unprocessed meat and poultry, eggs, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt and renewable biomass. FSFL microloans can also be used to finance wash and pack equipment used post-harvest, before a commodity is placed in cold storage.

To learn more about Farm Storage Facility Loans, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport or contact a local FSA county office. To find your local FSA County Office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Upcoming Acreage Reporting Dates

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

The following acreage reporting dates are applicable for the entire state of Georgia:

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| September 15, 2016: | Sweet Corn (planted between July 15 – August 25) |
| November 15, 2016: | Apiculture, PRF and Perennial Forage (Grass) with intended use of forage or grazing. NOTE: This is the deadline for 2017 acreage reporting purposes. |

The following exceptions apply to the above acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the above 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 above 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. Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP covered crops is the earlier of the dates listed above or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins. For questions regarding crop certification and crop loss reports, please contact your local FSA County Office.

Livestock Forage Losses

LFP provides compensation to eligible livestock producers who suffer grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land in **ELIGIBLE counties**.

ONLY

Producers in the following 64 counties are eligible to apply for 2016 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) benefits on native pasture, improved pasture, and forage sorghum **AT THE TIME THIS ARTICLE IS WRITTEN:**

Banks Bartow Butts Carroll Catoosa Chattooga Cherokee Clayton Cobb Coweta Dade

DeKalb Douglas Elbert Fannin Fayette Floyd Forsyth Franklin Fulton Gilmer Gordon

Gwinnett Habersham Hall Hart Heard Henry Jackson Lamar Lincoln Lumpkin Madison

Meriwether Murray Newton Paulding Pike Rabun Rockdale Spalding Stephens Walker

White Whitfield Wilkes

NOTE: Eligibility is updated every Thursday and additional counties may become eligible in future weeks; please check with your local FSA County Office to see if your county is eligible.

County Offices can only accept LFP applications after notification is received from the National Office that they are in a county with a qualifying drought rating. **IMPORTANT - County eligibility is based solely on the U.S. Drought Monitor Rating** for Georgia and neither the FSA State Office nor County Offices have any input into the determination of LFP eligibility for a county.

Eligible livestock producers must complete a CCC-853 and the required supporting documentation no later than January 30, 2017 for 2016 losses. **Producers with cash-leased land are required to provide written lease agreements from the land owner containing specific information on the rented land.** In addition, grazing land for which benefits are requested under LFP are required to have been reported to the FSA office; if the land has not already been reported, a late-filed acreage report can be accepted but a "late-filing" fee will be assessed.

Additional Information about LFP, including eligible livestock is available at your local FSA County Office or online at: www.fsa.usda.gov.

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

The Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) provides emergency assistance to eligible livestock, honeybees, and farm-raised fish producers who have losses due to adverse weather or other conditions, such as hurricanes, tornados, 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), or the loss of purchased feed and/or mechanically harvested feed due to an eligible adverse weather event.

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 October 1, 2015 to September 30, 2016 must file:

- A notice of loss **the earlier of** 30 calendar days of when the loss occurs or by November 1, 2016
- An application for payment by November 1, 2016

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.

Report Livestock Losses

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to eligible producers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather events such as tornados floods, lightning, wildfires, extreme heat or extreme cold (**ONLY if certain and specific criteria are met**) as well as attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law. **NOTE:** Coyotes are NOT federally protected and losses caused by coyotes are NOT eligible for LIP.

For 2016, eligible losses must occur on or after Jan. 1, 2016, and before December 31, 2016. A notice of loss must be filed with FSA within 30 days of when the loss occurs. Participants must provide supporting documentation to their local FSA office verifying the loss no later than 30 calendar days after the end of the calendar year for which benefits are requested.

IMPORTANT – Documentation provided by the producer must be verifiable and the types of documentation that meet the “verifiable requirements” are not usually available to livestock producers in Georgia. It is strongly suggested that producers incurring livestock losses **contact their local FSA office immediately upon discovering livestock losses** and arrange for the County Office to make a farm visit to verify the number of livestock lost and the cause of death. **Otherwise the producer may not be able to provide the verifiable documentation required for LIP eligibility.**

Producers who suffer livestock losses in 2016 must file both of the following:

- A notice of loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss occurred
- An application for payment by January 30, 2017.

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

Tree Assistance Program (TAP) Sign-up

Orchardists and nursery tree growers who experience losses from natural disasters during calendar year 2016 must submit a TAP application within 90 calendar days after the disaster event. TAP was authorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014 as a permanent disaster program. TAP provides financial assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines damaged by natural disasters.

It is important that producer contact the County Office as soon as possible to allow for the scheduling of a farm visit to determine the extent of the loss.

Eligible tree types include trees, bushes or vines that produce an annual crop for commercial purposes. Nursery trees include ornamental, fruit, nut and Christmas trees that are produced for commercial sale. Trees used for pulp or timber are ineligible.

To qualify for TAP, orchardists must suffer a qualifying tree, bush or vine loss in excess of 15 percent mortality (PLUS an additional percent for the particular type of tree, bush, or vine) resulting from the eligible natural disaster. The eligible trees, bushes or vines must have been owned when the natural disaster occurred; however, eligible growers are not required to own the land on which the eligible trees, bushes and vines were planted.

If the TAP application is approved, the eligible trees, bushes and vines must be replaced within 12 months from the date the application is approved. The cumulative total quantity of acres planted to trees, bushes or vines, for which a producer can receive TAP payments, cannot exceed 500 acres annually.

USDA Expands Microloans to Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property

Producers, Including Beginning and Underserved Farmers, Have a New Option to Gain Access to Land

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, which celebrates its third anniversary this week, 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).

This microloan announcement is another USDA resource for America's farmers and ranchers to utilize, especially as [new and beginning farmers and ranchers](#) look for the assistance they need to get started. To learn more about the FSA microloan program visit www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans, or contact your local FSA County Office. To find your nearest office location, please visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

46 Counties Eligible for Emergency Loans Following Secretarial Disaster Declaration

Effective August 10, 2016, Barrow, Dawson, Harris, Pickens, Talbot, Troup, Union, Upson, and Walton Counties were declared as primary disaster counties and Bartow, Dawson, Harris, Pickens, Talbot, Troup, Union, Upson, Bartow, Chattahoochee, Cherokee, Clarke, Coweta, Crawford, Fannin, Forsyth,

Gilmer, Gordon, Gwinnett, Hall, Heard, Jackson, Lamar, Lumpkin, Marion, Meriwether, Monroe, Morgan, Muscogee, Newton, Oconee, Pike, Rockdale, Taylor, Towns and White Counties were declared as contiguous disaster counties due to recent drought. Under this designation, producers with operations in any primary or contiguous county are eligible to apply for low interest emergency loans.

Emergency loans help producers recover from production and physical losses due to drought, flooding and other natural disasters or quarantine.

Producers have eight months from the date of the declaration to apply for emergency loan assistance. FSA will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability. Producers can borrow up to 100 percent of actual production or physical losses, to a maximum amount of \$500,000.

For more information about emergency loans, please contact your local FSA County Office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

19 Counties Eligible for Emergency Loans Following Secretarial Disaster Declaration

Effective August 18, 2016, Clarke, Oconee, Polk and Towns Counties were declared as primary disaster counties and Barrow, Bartow, Floyd, Greene, Habersham, Haralson, Jackson, Madison, Morgan, Oglethorpe, Paulding, Rabun, Union, Walton, and White Counties were declared as contiguous disaster counties due to recent drought. Under this designation, producers with operations in any primary or contiguous county are eligible to apply for low interest emergency loans.

Emergency loans help producers recover from production and physical losses due to drought, flooding and other natural disasters or quarantine.

Producers have eight months from the date of the declaration to apply for emergency loan assistance. FSA will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses, security available, repayment ability and other eligibility requirements. Producers can borrow up to 100 percent of actual production or physical losses, to a maximum amount of \$500,000.

For more information about emergency loans, please contact your local FSA County Office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

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).