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## Georgia State FSA Newsletter

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### Georgia State Farm Service Agency

355 E Hancock Ave.  
Athens, GA 30601

Phone: 706-546-2266

### State Executive Director:

Fred Harrison, Jr.

### State Committee:

Jerome Tucker  
Ivery Clifton  
Jaclyn Ford  
Reese Thompson  
William Brim

### USDA Announces Enrollment Period for Safety Net Coverage in 2017

Producers on farms with base acres under the safety net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill, known as the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, can begin visiting FSA county offices starting Nov. 1, 2016, to sign contracts and enroll for the 2017 crop year. The enrollment period will continue until Aug. 1, 2017.

Since shares and ownership of a farm can change year-to-year, producers on

**Administrative Officer:** the farm must enroll by signing a contract each program year.  
Dianne Westmoreland

**Farm Loan Chief:** If a farm is not enrolled during the 2017 enrollment period, the producers on that farm will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs for the 2017 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 2015 must still enroll during the 2017 enrollment period.  
David Laster

**Farm Program Chief:**  
Brett Martin

**Public Affairs/Outreach:**  
Neal Leonard

To find contact information for your local office go to [www.fsa.usda.gov/ga](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ga)

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](http://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 Expands Working-Lands Conservation Opportunities through CRP

USDA will offer a new Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Grasslands practice specifically tailored for small-scale livestock grazing operations. Small livestock operations with 100 or fewer head of grazing dairy cows (or the equivalent) can submit applications to enroll up to 200 acres of grasslands per farm. USDA's goal is to enroll up to 200,000 acres.

The current CRP Grasslands ranking period will end on Nov. 10, 2016. To date, the USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has received nearly 5,000 offers covering over 1 million acres for this CRP working-lands conservation program. These offers are predominantly larger acreage ranchland in Western states.

The new practice for small-scale livestock grazers aims, in part, to encourage greater diversity geographically and in types of livestock operation. This opportunity will close on Dec. 16, 2016. Offers selected this fiscal year will be enrolled into CRP Grasslands beginning Oct. 1, 2017.

Participants in CRP Grasslands establish or maintain long-term, resource-conserving grasses and other plant species to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat on marginally productive agricultural lands. CRP Grasslands participants can use the land for livestock production (e.g., grazing or producing hay), while following their conservation and grazing plans in order to maintain the cover. A goal of CRP Grasslands is to minimize conversion of grasslands either to row crops or to non-agricultural uses. Participants can receive annual payments of up to 75 percent of the grazing value of the land and up to 50 percent to fund cover or practices like cross-fencing to support rotational grazing or improving pasture cover to benefit pollinators or other wildlife.

USDA will select offers for enrollment based on six ranking factors: (1) current and future use, (2) new farmer/rancher or underserved producer involvement, (3) maximum grassland preservation, (4) vegetative cover, (5) environmental factors and (6) pollinator habitat. Offers for the second ranking period also will be considered from producers who submitted offers for the first ranking period but were not accepted, as well as from new offers submitted through Dec. 16.

Small livestock operations or other farming and ranching operations interested in participating in CRP Grasslands should contact their local FSA office. To find your local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>. To learn more about FSA's conservation programs, visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation).

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## Margin Protection Program for Dairy Enrollment Deadline is Dec. 16

The deadline for dairy producers to enroll in the Margin Protection Program (MPP) for Dairy is Dec. 16, 2016. This voluntary dairy safety net program, established by the 2014 Farm Bill, provides financial assistance to participating dairy producers when the margin – the difference between the price of milk and feed costs – falls below the coverage level selected by the producer. A USDA web tool, available at [www.fsa.usda.gov/mpptool](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mpptool), allows dairy producers to calculate levels of coverage available from MPP based on price projections.

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## 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:

November 15, 2016	Apiculture, PRF and Perennial Forage (Grass) with intended use of forage or grazing. <b>NOTE:</b> This is deadline for 2017 acreage reporting purposes.
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January 15, 2017

Apples, Blueberries, Canola, Peaches, Rye, and ALL Fall-Seeded  
Small Grains

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) policyholders 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 office.

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## USDA Climate Hub Building Block: Nitrogen Stewardship

USDA Climate Hubs are working with farmers, livestock producers, pasture and forest landowners to effectively partner in ways to help mitigate and adapt to a changing climate. Next in our series on the 10 Building Blocks for Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry is Nitrogen Stewardship.

Within the United States, agriculture is a significant source of nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) emissions—a greenhouse gas (GHG) that has a global warming potential 250 times more than carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). In 2013, cropland agriculture released approximately 136 MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e (Million Metric Tons of Carbon Dioxide-Equivalent) in direct N<sub>2</sub>O emissions. More than half of these N<sub>2</sub>O emissions are from synthetic fertilizers and organic amendments. Improved nitrogen management practices can reduce emissions from these sources.

The primary practice used in the Nitrogen Stewardship Building Block to reduce GHG emissions involves the 4Rs: right source, right rate, right time, and right place. The 4Rs come from the NRCS Conservation Practice Standard (CPS) Nutrient Management (590). To read more about Nitrogen Stewardship click the following link or copy and paste the link into your web browser:  
[http://www.usda.gov/oce/climate\\_change/building\\_blocks/2\\_NitrogenStewardship.pdf](http://www.usda.gov/oce/climate_change/building_blocks/2_NitrogenStewardship.pdf)

For more information about the USDA Climate Hubs click here:  
<http://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/>.

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## Document the Drought: USDA U.S. Drought Monitor Offers Producers a Voice to Report Drought Impacts

The U.S. Drought Monitor’s reporting feature offers producers an opportunity to submit drought impact and condition reports.

The USDA, in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, produced the U.S. Drought Monitor to include a reporting feature that allows producers to report local drought impacts and conditions.

The report allows producers to:

- Provide a written description of drought impacts on livelihood, activities, etc.;
- Select categories to show losses and gains as a result of the drought;
- Report on the duration of drought event;
- Select Affected Places – geographic areas ranging from an entire state to a small area within a state;
- Submit images that document the drought and its impact;
- Provide contact information (includes an option to keep information confidential).

The reporting tool for producers to record the effects of the drought can be accessed at the following link: <http://droughtreporter.unl.edu/submitreport/>

More information including state specific drought impact maps can be found on the U. S. Drought Monitor homepage: <http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/Home.aspx>

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## Livestock Forage Losses

Livestock Forage Disaster Program 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**.

As of November 1, 2016, **there are ONLY 84 counties eligible** to apply for 2016 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) benefits. Even though the grazing period for LFP was extended until December 1, 2016, **this extension did NOT guarantee that additional counties will become eligible for LFP or increased payments; all the extension did was allow additional time for these factors to be considered.** Eligibility for LFP and increased payments depends exclusively on the Drought Monitor Ratings and may or may not result in additional counties becoming eligible for LFP or increased payments.

**NOTE:** Eligibility for LFP and the **POSSIBILITY for increased** payments 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 office or online at: [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

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## **USDA Announces Streamlined Guaranteed Loans and Additional Lender Category for Small-Scale Operators**

Options Help More Beginning, Small and Urban Producers Gain Access to Credit

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the availability of a streamlined version of USDA guaranteed loans, which are tailored for smaller scale farms and urban producers. The program, called EZ Guarantee Loans, uses a simplified application process to help beginning, small, underserved and family farmers and ranchers apply for loans of up to \$100,000 from USDA-approved lenders to purchase farmland or finance agricultural operations.

USDA today also unveiled a new category of lenders that will join traditional lenders, such as banks and credit unions, in offering USDA EZ Guarantee Loans. Microlenders, which include Community Development Financial Institutions and Rural Rehabilitation Corporations, will be able to offer their customers up to \$50,000 of EZ Guaranteed Loans, helping to reach urban areas and underserved producers. Banks, credit unions and other traditional USDA-approved lenders, can offer customers up to \$100,000 to help with agricultural operation costs.

EZ Guarantee Loans offer low interest rates and terms up to seven years for financing operating expenses and 40 years for financing the purchase of farm real estate. USDA-approved lenders can issue these loans with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) guaranteeing the loan up to 95 percent.

USDA is providing a 90-day period for the public to review and comment on program improvements. To review program details, visit [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov), reference RIN 0560-AI34 and follow the instructions to submit comments.

More than half of all FSA loans go to new farmers and more than a quarter to underserved borrowers. FSA also offers loans of up to \$5,000 to young farmers and ranchers through the Youth Loan Program. Loans are made to eligible youth to finance agricultural projects, with almost 9,000 young people now participating. More information about the available types of FSA farm loans can be found at [www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans) or by contacting your local FSA office. To find your nearest office location, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>

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## **USDA Offers Targeted Farm Loan Funding for Underserved Groups and Beginning Farmers**

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds producers that FSA offers targeted farm ownership and farm operating loans to assist underserved applicants as well as beginning farmers and ranchers.

USDA defines underserved applicants as a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of the group without regard to their individual qualities. For farm loan program purposes, targeted underserved groups are women, African Americans, American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Hispanics and Asians and Pacific Islanders.

Underserved or beginning farmers and ranchers who cannot obtain commercial credit from a bank can apply for either FSA direct loans or guaranteed loans. Direct loans are made to applicants by FSA. Guaranteed loans are made by lending institutions who arrange for FSA to guarantee the loan. FSA can guarantee up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan. The FSA

guarantee allows lenders to make agricultural credit available to producers who do not meet the lender's normal underwriting criteria.

The direct and guaranteed loan program provides for two types of loans: farm ownership loans and farm operating loans. In addition to customary farm operating and ownership loans, FSA now offers Microloans through the direct loan program. The focus of Microloans is on the financing needs of small, beginning farmer, niche and non-traditional farm operations. Microloans are available for both ownership and operating finance needs. To learn more about microloans, visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans).

To qualify as a beginning producer, the individual or entity must meet the eligibility requirements outlined for direct or guaranteed loans. Additionally, individuals and all entity members must have operated a farm for less than 10 years. Applicants must materially or substantially participate in the operation.

For more information on FSA's farm loan programs and targeted underserved and beginning farmer guidelines, visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans).

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## **Borrower Training**

Borrower training is available for all Farm Service Agency customers. This training is required for all direct loan applicants, unless the applicant has a waiver issued by the agency.

Borrower training includes instruction in production and financial management. The purpose is to help the applicant develop and improve skills that are necessary to successfully operate a farm and build equity in the operation. It aims to help the producer become financially successful. Borrower training is provided, for a fee, by agency approved vendors. Contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager for a list of approved vendors.

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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).