

January 2016



Alabama FSA Newsletter

Alabama Farm Service Agency

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www.fsa.usda.gov/al

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Please contact your local FSA Office for questions specific to your operation or county.

Firearms and Dangerous Weapons Forbidden In Federal Facilities

USDA Service Centers and Farm Service Agency Offices are Off Limits for Firearms

This is an important reminder to all customers and patrons of USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices and USDA Service Centers statewide that **firearms are forbidden (even with a permit/license) in Federal Buildings.** A Federal Building by definition is any building owned, leased or rented by the Federal Government, where Federal employees are regularly present for the purpose of performing their official duties.

The items that are prohibited in Federal facilities include any item prohibited by any applicable Federal, State, local, and tribal law and/or ordinance, as well as firearms, dangerous weapons, explosives, or other destructive devices (including their individual parts or components) designed, redesigned, used, intended for use, or readily converted to cause injury, death, or property damage. Possession of firearms and dangerous weapons in Federal facilities as outline above is a crime punishable by fines and imprisonment.

For a complete list of items prohibited in Federal facilities, please view and/or download the document titled, **Items Prohibited from Federal Facilities: An Interagency Security Committee Standard:** <http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/isc-items-prohibited-federal-facilities-feb-2013-508.pdf>. **The lists of prohibited items outlined in this document apply to all facility occupants, contractors, and the visiting public.**

If you have questions or concerns regarding this notification, please contact your local Farm Service Agency Office—<http://offices.usda.gov>.

USDA Removes Farm Program Payments to Managers Not Actively Engaged in Farming

USDA finalized a rule to ensure that farm safety-net payments are issued only to active managers of farms that operate as joint ventures or general partnerships, consistent with the direction and authority provide by Congress in the 2014 Farm Bill. The action, which exempts family farm operations, closes a loophole where individuals who were not actively part of farm management still received payments.

Since 1987, the broad definition of “actively engaged” resulted in some general partnerships and joint ventures adding managers to the farming operation, qualifying for more payments, that did not substantially contribute to management. The rule applies to operations seeking more than one farm manager, and requires measureable, documented hours and key management activities each year. Some operations of certain sizes and complexity may be allowed up to three qualifying managers under limited conditions. The changes apply to payments for 2016 and subsequent crop years for Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) Programs, Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP) and Marketing Loan Gains (MLG) realized via the Marketing Assistance Loan program.

As required by Congress, the new rule does not apply to family farms, or change regulations related to contributions of land, capital, equipment, or labor. The changes go into effect for the 2016 crop year for most farms. Farms that have already planted fall crops for 2016 have until the 2017 crop year to comply. For more details, producers are encouraged to consult their local Farm Service Agency office.

Enrollment Period for 2016 USDA Safety Net Coverage Began Dec. 7

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has announced that producers who chose coverage from the safety net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill, known as the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, can begin visiting FSA county offices starting Dec. 7, 2015, to sign contracts to enroll in coverage for 2016. The enrollment period will continue until Aug. 1, 2016.

Although the choice between ARC and PLC is completed and remains in effect through 2018, producers must still enroll their farm by signing a contract each year to receive coverage.

Producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office to schedule an appointment to enroll. If a farm is not enrolled during the 2016 enrollment period, producers on that farm will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs should crop prices or farm revenues fall below the historical price or revenue benchmarks established by the program.

The two 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>.

USDA Improves Access to Capital for Tribal Farmlands with Multiple Owners

New Program Allows More Farm Loans for “Highly Fractionated” Tribal Land

USDA announced that it is expanding the availability of farm loans for Indian tribes and members to purchase tribal farmland that has multiple owners. The improved lending opportunities are possible due to new authority granted by the 2014 Farm Bill, which allows USDA to provide revolving loan funds to qualified intermediary lenders that can relend the funds to qualified tribes and individuals. The program became available Dec. 1, 2015.

As a direct result of more than a dozen tribal meetings across the country, USDA is able to implement a solution to a longstanding barrier to financing, which will increase the availability of farm loans to Native Americans who want to start or expand a farming or ranching operation on Indian lands.

Under the [1887 Dawes Act](#), Indian reservation land was divided and allotted to individual tribal members such that with the passing of each generation, title ownership was divided and parceled among heirs, while the land was not. As a result, land once owned by a single person could today be owned by hundreds or thousands of individuals, resulting in what is known as “highly fractionated Indian land.” In many instances, landowners are unknown or cannot be located, which complicates the coordination of ownership or prevents the use of the property altogether. There are more than 245,000 owners of three million fractionated land interests, spanning approximately 150 Indian reservations.

Under the new published rules, USDA will now allow tribes and tribal members to submit a farm loan application to an intermediary lender. To participate, intermediary lenders first must be approved by USDA. The lenders may be private and tribal nonprofit corporations, public agencies, Indian tribes, or lenders subject to federal or state regulation (such as a credit union or other financial institution). FSA will lend to the intermediary, which will relend to the applicant. The intermediary lender also will administer the loan for the applicant.

Additional information on guidelines, criteria for intermediate lenders and how to file a loan application under Highly Fractionated Indian Land loan program was shared Dec. 7, 2015, at the Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) meeting and Tribal consultation in Las Vegas, Nev. For more information, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans or contact the local FSA county office. To find the local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

USDA also opened a 90-day period for the public to submit comments on this program. Written comments must be submitted by Feb. 29, 2016, at www.regulations.gov, using Regulation Identifier Number 0560-AI32.

New USDA Commitments to Help Build Up Next Generation of Farmers and Ranchers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced a commitment by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to prioritize \$5.6 billion over the next two years within USDA programs and services that serve new and beginning farmers and ranchers. Deputy Secretary Harden also

announced a new, tailored web tool designed to connect burgeoning farm entrepreneurs with programs and resources available to help them get started.

The new web tool is available at www.usda.gov/newfarmers. The site was designed based on feedback from new and beginning farmers and ranchers around the country, who cited unfamiliarity with programs and resources as a challenge to starting and expanding their operations. The site features advice and guidance on everything a new farm business owner needs to know, from writing a business plan, to obtaining a loan to grow their business, to filing taxes as a new small business owner. By answering a series of questions about their operation, farmers can use the site's Discovery Tool to build a personalized set of recommendations of USDA programs and services that may meet their needs.

Using the new web tool and other outreach activities, and operating within its existing resources, USDA has set a new goal of increasing beginning farmer and rancher participation by an additional 6.6 percent across key USDA programs, which were established or strengthened by the 2014 Farm Bill, for a total investment value of approximately \$5.6 billion. Programs were targeted for expanded outreach and commitment based on their impact on expanding opportunity for new and beginning farmers and ranchers, including starting or expanding an operation, developing new markets, supporting more effective farming and conservation practices, and having access to relevant training and education opportunities. USDA will provide quarterly updates on its progress towards meeting its goal. A full explanation of the investment targets, benchmarks and outcomes is available at: [BFR-Commitment-Factsheet](#).

As the average age of the American farmer now exceeds 58 years, and data shows that almost 10 percent of farmland in the continental United States will change hands in the next five years, we have no time to lose in getting more new farmers and ranchers established. Equally important is encouraging young people to pursue careers in industries that support American agriculture. According to [an employment outlook report](#) released by USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and Purdue University, one of the best fields for new college graduates is agriculture. Nearly 60,000 high-skilled agriculture job openings are expected annually in the United States for the next five years, yet only 35,000 graduates with a bachelor's degree or higher in agriculture related fields are expected to be available to fill them. The report also shows that women make up more than half of the food, agriculture, renewable natural resources, and environment higher education graduates in the United States. USDA recently released a [series of fact sheets](#) showcasing the impact of women in agriculture nationwide.

Today's announcement builds on USDA's ongoing work to engage its resources to inspire a strong next generation of farmers and ranchers by improving access to land and capital; building market opportunities; extending conservation opportunities; offering appropriate risk management tools; and increasing outreach and technical support. To learn more about USDA's efforts, visit the [Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Results Page](#).

USDA Offers Flood Impacted Alabama Farmers and Ranchers Immediate Disaster Assistance

Farm Service Agency Stands Ready to Assist Agricultural Producers Slammed by Recent Heavy Rains

Alabama Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds farmers and ranchers across the state of federal farm program benefits that may be available to help eligible producers recover from recent heavy rains and flooding.

FSA offers disaster assistance and low-interest loan programs to assist agricultural producers in their recovery efforts following floods or similar qualifying natural disasters. Available programs and loans include:

- **Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)** - provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory, or prevented planting occur due to natural disasters (includes native grass for grazing). Eligible producers must have purchased NAP coverage for 2015 crops.
- **Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)** - offers payments to eligible producers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather. Eligible losses may include those determined by FSA to have been caused by hurricanes, floods, blizzards, wildfires, tropical storms, tornadoes, lightening, extreme heat, and extreme cold. Producers will be required to provide verifiable documentation of death losses resulting from an eligible adverse weather event and must submit a notice of loss to their local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is apparent.
- **Tree Assistance Program (TAP)** – provides assistance to eligible orchardists and nursery tree growers for qualifying tree, shrub and vine losses due to natural disaster.
- **Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)** - provides emergency relief for losses due to feed or water shortages, disease, adverse weather, or other conditions, which are not adequately addressed by other disaster programs. ELAP covers physically damaged or destroyed livestock feed that was purchased or mechanically harvested forage or feedstuffs intended for use as feed for the **producer's** eligible livestock. In order to be considered eligible, harvested forage must be baled; forage that is only cut, raked or windrowed is not eligible. Producers must submit a notice of loss to their local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent. ELAP also covers up to 150 lost grazing days in instances when a producer has been forced to remove livestock from a grazing pasture due to floodwaters. For beekeepers, ELAP covers beehive losses (the physical structure) in instances where the hive has been destroyed by a natural disaster including flooding, high winds and tornadoes.
- **Emergency Loan Program** – Available to producers with agriculture operations located in a county under a primary or contiguous **Secretarial Disaster designation**. These low interest loans help producers recover from production and physical losses due to drought and flooding.
- **Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)** - provides emergency funding for farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate land severely damaged by natural disasters; includes fence loss.
- **HayNet** - is an Internet-based Hay and Grazing Net Ad Service allowing farmers and ranchers to share 'Need Hay' ads and 'Have Hay' ads online. Farmers also can use another feature to post advertisements for grazing land, specifically ads announcing the availability of grazing land or ads requesting a need for land to graze. www.fsa.usda.gov/haynet.

To establish or retain FSA program eligibility, farmers and ranchers must report prevented planting and failed acres (crops and grasses). Prevented planting acreage must be reported on form FSA-576, Notice of Loss, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and Risk Management Agency (RMA).

For more information on disaster assistance programs and loans visit www.fsa.usda.gov/ or contact your local FSA Office. To find your local FSA county office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Report Livestock Losses by Jan. 30, 2016

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to eligible producers for livestock death

losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law. LIP compensates livestock owners and contract growers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather, including losses due to hurricanes, floods, blizzards, wildfires, extreme heat or extreme cold.

For 2015, eligible losses must occur on or after Jan. 1, 2015, and before December 31, 2015. A notice of loss must be filed with FSA within 30 days of when the loss of livestock is apparent. Participants must provide the following supporting documentation to their local FSA office no later than 30 calendar days after the end of the calendar year for which benefits are requested:

- Proof of death documentation
- Copy of growers contracts
- Proof of normal mortality documentation

USDA has established normal mortality rates for each type and weight range of eligible livestock, i.e. Adult Beef Cow = 1.5% and Non-Adult Beef Cattle (less than 400 pounds) = 3%. These established percentages reflect losses that are considered expected or typical under “normal” conditions. Producers who suffer livestock losses in 2015 must file both of the following:

- A notice of loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss was apparent or by January 30, 2016
- An application for payment by January 30, 2016.

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

USDA Commits \$2.5 Million to Expand New Farmer Education

Training Will also Help Returning Service Members, Underserved, and Urban Producers

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA has announced that \$2.5 million in grants is now available for projects to educate new and underserved farmers about more than 20 Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs that can provide financial, disaster or technical assistance to the agricultural community.

The grants will be awarded to nonprofits and public higher education institutions that develop proposals to improve farmer education on topics such as financial training, value-added production, recordkeeping, property inheritance, and crop production practices.

USDA will conduct four evaluation periods to review applications, with the deadlines of Nov. 20, 2015, Jan. 22, 2015, Mar. 18, 2016, and May 27, 2016. Awards between \$20,000 and \$100,000 per applicant will be available. To learn more about the funding solicitation and the related Farm Service Agency programs, details can be found at www.grants.gov with the reference number USDA-FSA-CA-2015-001. For nonprofits and public institutions of higher education that are considering participation, an online informational session will be conducted on Sept. 28, 2015. Additional information is posted on the Web at www.fsa.usda.gov/outreach.

Guaranteed Loan Program

FSA guaranteed loans allow lenders to provide agricultural credit to farmers who do not meet the lender's normal underwriting criteria. Farmers and ranchers apply for a guaranteed loan through a

lender, and the lender arranges for the guarantee. FSA can guarantee up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan. Guaranteed loans can be used for both farm ownership and operating purposes.

Guaranteed farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, construct or repair buildings, develop farmland to promote soil and water conservation or to refinance debt.

Guaranteed operating loans can be used to purchase livestock, farm equipment, feed, seed, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance and other operating expenses.

FSA can guarantee farm ownership and operating loans up to \$1,399,000. Repayment terms vary depending on the type of loan, collateral and the producer's ability to repay the loan. Operating loans are normally repaid within seven years and farm ownership loans are not to exceed 40 years.

Please contact your lender or local FSA farm loan office for more information on guaranteed loans.

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).