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- [USDA's Farm Service Agency Officially Announces April 15th Sign-Up Date for Disaster Assistance Programs](#)
- [Loan Deficiency Payment Requests on CCC-633EZ](#)
- [USDA Encourages Record Updates for FSA Programs](#)
- [New Farm Bill Offers Increased Opportunities for Producers](#)
- [USDA Enhances Farm Storage Facility Loan Program](#)
- [Milk Income Loss Program \(MILC\)](#)
- [Farm Loan Program Availability](#)
- [Montana Farmers & Ranchers Encouraged to Enroll in GovDelivery for Montana FSA eNews](#)
- [Signup Deadline for USDA-NRCS Programs](#)
- [Upcoming Montana FSA Dates](#)

MONTANA FSA: April 2014 eNewsletter

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[*Click here for online directory of Montana FSA county offices.](#)
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USDA's Farm Service Agency Officially Announces April 15th Sign-Up Date for Disaster Assistance Programs

Enrollment Begins Tuesday, April 15 for Livestock, Honeybee, Farm-Raised Fish Programs

Montana agricultural producers can sign-up for disaster assistance programs, reestablished and strengthened by the 2014 Farm Bill, beginning Tuesday, April 15, 2014.

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) and the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) will provide payments to eligible producers for livestock deaths and grazing losses that have occurred since the expiration of the livestock disaster assistance programs in 2011, as well as losses suffered in calendar years 2012, 2013, and 2014.

LFP - Montana Counties:

Eligible Montana Counties are those that were rated by the U.S. Drought Monitor as at least D2 (severe drought) through D4 (exceptional drought) for

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Reasonable Accommodations:

People with disabilities who require accommodations to participate in FSA programs should contact the County Executive Director in the FSA Office in your area or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339. Alternatively, you may also contact Montana FSA Civil Rights Coordinator Jennifer Cole at (406) 587-6786 or jennifer.cole@mt.usda.gov.

a period of time during the normal grazing period.

2012: For 2012 LFP, eligible producers who own or lease grazing land or pastureland physically located in the following 27 Montana counties may apply: Beaverhead, Big Horn, Broadwater, Carbon, Carter, Cascade, Custer, Fallon, Fergus, Gallatin, Garfield, Golden Valley, Jefferson, Judith Basin, Madison, Meagher, Musselshell, Park, Petroleum, Powder River, Rosebud, Silver Bow, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Treasure, Wheatland and Yellowstone.

2013: For 2013 LFP, ten (10) eligible drought counties include: Beaverhead, Big Horn, Broadwater, Carbon, Gallatin, Jefferson, Madison, Silver Bow, Stillwater and Yellowstone.

MONTANA LFP MAP: A Montana map of eligible LFP counties for 2012 and 2013 is available here: http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_Image/mt-lfp-2012-2013.jpg (JPG) or here http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/mt-lfp-2012-2013-map.pdf (PDF).

Enrollment also begins on April 15 for producers with losses covered by the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) and the Tree Assistance Program (TAP) in 2011, when the programs expired, through 2014.

“Montana's producers have encountered several extreme weather conditions over the past few years, from a drought in southern Montana, to flooding, to extreme cold and snow,” said Montana FSA State Executive Director Bruce Nelson. “While LIP, ELAP and TAP are available in all Montana counties LFP is available in 27 Montana counties for 2012 and 10 Montana counties for 2013. These important programs will help our producers recover from these disasters.”

ELAP provides emergency assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybees and farm-raised fish that have losses due to disease, adverse weather, or other conditions, such as blizzards, and wildfires (on private land) not covered under LFP and LIP. TAP provides financial assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines damaged by natural disasters. LIP provides compensation to eligible livestock producers that have suffered 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. LFP provides compensation to eligible livestock producers that have suffered grazing losses due to drought or fire on Federally managed land.

Montana agricultural producers from any county can apply for the LIP, ELAP and TAP programs and producers in the 27 eligible Montana counties can apply for 2012 LFP and in 10 eligible Montana counties for 2013 LFP. For more information, visit any FSA office in your local USDA Service Center.

Loan Deficiency Payment Requests on CCC-633EZ

Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP's) are payments made to producers who agree to forgo the loan in return for a payment on the eligible commodity. The CCC-633EZ form is a two-part loan deficiency payment request that allows producers to indicate their intentions to receive LDP or Marketing Loan benefits **BEFORE** losing beneficial interest (title, risk of loss, and control of the commodity) in the eligible commodity. By signing page 1 of the CCC-633EZ, the producer indicates his or her intentions to receive LDP or Marketing Loan benefits. This one

page covers all counties and all eligible harvested commodities for the entire crop year for the individual, joint operation or entity identified on the form. Page 1 of the CCC-633EZ form **MUST** be signed **BEFORE** beneficial interest in the commodity is lost. Once page 1 of the CCC-633EZ has been signed and submitted, the producer can submit an LDP request by completing page 2 for all harvested commodities, or page 4 for wool, mohair and unshorn pelts. The LDP or Marketing Loan request must be submitted any time **BEFORE** the final loan availability date

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USDA Encourages Record Updates for FSA Programs

USDA recommends that farmers and ranchers update records in advance for FSA programs in order to improve the sign-up process and expedite implementation of programs. Producers are encouraged to report farm records and business structure changes to a [local FSA Service Center](#) as soon as the changes are made.

Examples of updates or changes to report include:

- New producers or producers who have not reported farm records to FSA.
- Producers who have recently bought, sold or rented land. Those producers need to ensure that changes have been reported and properly recorded by local FSA county office personnel. Reports of purchased or sold property should include a copy of the land deed, and if land has been leased, then documentation, such as a lease, should be provided that indicates the producer had/has control of the acreage.
- Producers that have changed business structures (e.g. formed a partnership or LLC) need to ensure that these relationships and shares are properly recorded with FSA. Even family farms that have records on file may want to ensure that this is recorded accurately as it may impact payment limits.

Farm records can be updated during business hours at the FSA Service Center that administers the county where the farm or ranch is located. Producers can contact their local FSA Service Center in advance to find out what paperwork they may need. In addition, bank account information should be supplied or updated if necessary to ensure that producers receive payments as quickly as possible through direct deposit.

New Farm Bill Offers Increased Opportunities for Producers

The 2014 Farm Bill offers increased opportunities for producers including farm loan program modifications that create flexibility for new and existing farmers. A fact sheet outlining modifications to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) Farm Loan Programs is available [here](#). The Farm Bill expands lending opportunities for thousands of farmers and ranchers to begin and continue operations, including greater flexibility in determining eligibility, raising loan limits, and emphasizing beginning and socially disadvantaged producers.

Changes that will take effect immediately include:

- Elimination of loan term limits for guaranteed operating loans.

- Modification of the definition of beginning farmer, using the average farm size for the county as a qualifier instead of the median farm size.
- Modification of the Joint Financing Direct Farm Ownership Interest Rate to 2 percent less than regular Direct Farm Ownership rate, with a floor of 2.5 percent. Previously, the rate was established at 5 percent.
- Increase of the maximum loan amount for Direct Farm Ownership down payments from \$225,000 to \$300,000.
- Elimination of rural residency requirement for Youth Loans, allowing urban youth to benefit.
- Debt forgiveness on Youth Loans, which will not prevent borrowers from obtaining additional loans from the federal government.
- Increase of the guarantee amount on Conservation Loans from 75 to 80 percent and 90 percent for socially disadvantaged borrowers and beginning farmers.
- Microloans will not count toward loan term limits for veterans and beginning farmers.

Additional modifications must be implemented through the rulemaking processes. Visit the [FSA Farm Bill website](#) for detailed information and updates to farm loan programs.

USDA Enhances Farm Storage Facility Loan Program

Farm Storage and Facility Loan program provides low-interest financing to producers to build or upgrade farm storage and handling facilities. Eligible commodities include grains, oilseeds, pulse crops, hay, honey, renewable biomass commodities, fruits and vegetables. Qualified facilities include grain bins, hay barns and cold storage facilities for fruits and vegetables. Farm Storage Facility Loans security requirements have been eased for loans between \$50,000 and \$100,000. Previously, all loans in excess of \$50,000 required a promissory note and additional security, such as a lien on real estate. Now loans up to \$100,000 can be secured by only a promissory note. Contact your local FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov for more about FSA programs and loans, including the Farm Storage Facility Loan Program.

Milk Income Loss Program (MILC)

The continuation of the MILC program has been authorized from September 1, 2013 through the earlier of September 1, 2014 or the date on which the Dairy Margin Protection Program provisions take effect. MILC contracts are automatically extended for FY2014, so there is no need for MILC producers to re-enroll. The production start month previously selected by an operation is applicable for FY2014. However, beginning Monday, April 14th through Close of Business May 30th, MILC participants can change their production start month. The relief period is limited to FY2014 production start month selections only. MILC applications can be accepted during the relief period for new dairy operations that began operation since October 1, 2013 and BEFORE April 14th. AGI provisions do not apply.

Farm Loan Program Availability

FSA has a number of loan programs available to assist applicants to begin or continue in agricultural production. As a farmer or rancher, whether you are just starting out or have many years of experience, loans are available for farm operating purposes and/or to purchase or improve a farm or ranch. All qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs. As the "Lender of First Opportunity" FSA targets some of the direct and guaranteed loan funds for beginning and/or socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers. For purposes of this program, a beginning farmer/rancher is defined as someone who started in farming or ranching less than 10 years ago; socially disadvantaged individuals are women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere.

Emergency Loan Program available in Montana disaster counties

FSA's Emergency Loan Program is available for agricultural producers in counties designated as primary or contiguous natural disaster areas (link to Montana disaster counties to date is available below). At this time, for FSA, the Secretarial and Presidential designation only triggers the Emergency Loan Program. Eligible producers have eight months from the date of the disaster designation to apply for low-interest emergency loans to 1.) restore or replace essential property; 2.) pay all or part of production costs associated with the disaster year; 3.) pay essential family living expenses; or 4.) refinance certain debts, excluding real estate. Producers interested in applying for an emergency loan, or other FLP loans, should contact their local FSA office to set up an appointment with the Farm Loan Program staff serving your area. [Click here for a map of Montana disaster counties to date.](#)

Montana Farmers & Ranchers Encouraged to Enroll in GovDelivery for Montana FSA eNews

Montana agricultural producers who have not signed up in GovDelivery eNews for electronic FSA eNews updates are encouraged to do so in order to receive timely news from Montana FSA via email. To subscribe, contact your local FSA office and let them know that you want to receive eNews via GovDelivery. You can also signup on your own at: www.fsa.usda.gov/subscribe and subscribe to the following Montana FSA subscriptions: under Updates by State and County - select Montana State Office Newsletter and Updates and Your County(ies) Office Newsletter and Updates and under News and Events select MT - Press Releases.

FSA Also Offers Farm Bill Website and Online Overview of Farm Bill Programs

The Agricultural Act of 2014 (the Act), also known as the 2014 Farm Bill, was signed by President Obama on Feb. 7, 2014. The Act repeals certain programs, continues some programs with modifications, and authorizes several new programs administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA). Most of these programs are authorized and funded through 2018. For the latest on 2014 Farm Bill programs administered by FSA, please visit our Farm Bill website at www.fsa.usda.gov/farmbill and for an FSA program overview please read, download and/or print our recently posted FSA Farm Bill Fact Sheet titled, [What's in the 2014 Farm Bill for Farm Service Agency Customers?](#) For more information on FSA, please contact your local USDA Service Center or visit us online at www.fsa.usda.gov.

Signup Deadline for USDA-NRCS Programs

The signup deadline for many of the USDA/NRCS programs is June 1, 2014. Although NRCS accepts program applications through the year, the signup deadline is the cutoff for applications to be considered for funding in the coming year. If you are planning on applying conservation practices and would like to be considered for cost share and/easement programs, you will need to submit an application to the local NRCS office before June 1, 2014. These programs can assist agricultural producers improve or enhance their natural resources by installing conservation practices such as livestock water projects, cross fencing, grazing plans, irrigation improvement projects, stream restoration projects, wildlife habitat improvement projects, feedlot improvements, numerous irrigated and dry cropland practices, organic farming conversion, and forest stand improvement. The programs offer numerous incentive payments for improved management practices on forest, crop, and grazing lands. If you have any questions about the conservation programs available through the NRCS, please come in or call your local NRCS office located in a USDA service center.

Upcoming Montana FSA Dates

- **April 15** - Signup Begins for FSA Disaster Programs (LIP, LFP, ELAP and TAP)
- **May 5** - First day soybean producers may request a Soybean Request for Referendum Form (AO-1595) from a local FSA office
- **May 30** -Deadline for soybean producers to submit a Soybean Request for Referendum Form (or Postmarked by this date)

- **May 31** – Final Loan/LDP Availability Dates for Corn, Dry peas, Grain sorghum, Lentils, Mustard seed, Safflower, Small chickpeas, Large chickpeas, Soybeans and Sunflower seed.
- **July 15:** 2014 Acreage Reporting Deadline for Spring Seeded Alfalfa Seed, Forage Seeding, all other spring seeded crops and any crops not previously reported.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. 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).