NEWSLETTER

July 2015

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Website
www.fsa.usda.gov/ne

From the State Executive Director

Dan Steinkruger
State Executive Director

We currently are finishing the 2014 Farm Bill implementation by completing the 2014 and 2015 Farm Program signup. The emergency livestock programs, base and yield elections and much more have been a challenge. Thank you for your cooperation in making federal farm loan and farm programs work to support Nebraska agriculture.

I credit our great staff and County Committees at the Nebraska Farm Service Agency. They take these complicated programs, sit down with you and shape them to provide income, loan, emergency and conservation support in our state. It is a successful partnership and our mission.

We have many employees retiring after long and successful careers. We are recruiting, hiring and training a new generation here at USDA's Farm Service Agency. We will miss our employees as they retire and we welcome a new, talented workforce.

Please take the time to review this Special Edition newsletter, and as always, direct your questions to any of our seventy-one Nebraska FSA Offices. I promise that we are committed to you with your loan and program needs available at USDA.

Agriculture Risk Coverage/Price Loss Coverage (ARCPLC) Enrollment

Eligible producers need to now enroll in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for 2014 and 2015. The enrollment period for both years will end Sept. 30, 2015. Producers must enroll farms into an ARCPLC contract each year in order to be eligible for potential payments.

Although the base reallocation, yield update, and ARCPLC program election process was recently completed, contract enrollment is the final necessary step to fully participate in the program. The ARCPLC contract designates the individuals or entities who have an interest in the farm each year and their share of base acres or covered commodities. A copy of the terms and conditions of the contract is available at: http://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov/efcommon/eFileServices/eForms/CCC861-862_APPENDIX.PDF

A final Notice of Bases and Yields was recently mailed to all tenants and landowners. This information reflects the decisions made to reallocate or retain bases and update or retain PLC payment yields. For eligible counties and crops, this notice also contains the Historical Irrigated Percentage (HIP) that will be used to calculate ARC-County payments for the farm. A list of counties and crops that will utilize the HIP (irrigated/non-irrigated designations) can be found at www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc. Contact your local FSA Office if you have questions about the information in the notice.

It is important to notify FSA of any changes that occurred to your farming operation for 2014 or 2015 when completing ARCPLC enrollment. Failure to timely report changes could result in a loss of program benefits, as changes may affect contract shares and payment eligibility determinations. Participating producers will need to complete documents establishing their eligibility for payments, including a CCC-902 Farm Operating Plan to evaluate compliance with actively engaged in farming requirements, an AD-1026 certifying compliance with highly-erodible land and wetland provisions, and a CCC-941 certifying compliance with the $900,000 Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) limitation.

Maintenance of ARCPLC Acres

ARCPLC program participants agree to effectively control noxious weeds, maintain the land on the farm in accordance with sound agricultural practices, and use the land for an agricultural or conserving use. The Nebraska FSA State Committee has outlined that ARCPLC participants must provide season-long control of noxious weeds by the most appropriate method including spraying, mowing, or physical removal. Noxious weeds must be controlled before seed production. A listing of Nebraska noxious weeds can be viewed on the Nebraska Weed Control Association website at www.neweed.org/weeds.aspx.

Producers should consult the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to ensure that adequate cover exists to prevent the occurrence of wind and water erosion. Appropriate cover crops may need to be planted and tillage should generally be avoided on highly erodible land as a method of weed control. Maintenance of sufficient cover is particularly important if land was prevented from being planted, or is otherwise idle.

ARCPLC Payments

Payments under both the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs are dependent upon a crop's national average price over an entire marketing year. As a result, payments are not determined until October of the following year. Determinations for 2014 payments will be made and payments will be issued, if earned, in October 2015. 2015 ARCPLC payments will not be calculated and issued, if earned, until October 2016.

PLC payments are earned when a crop's national average marketing price is below the reference price, as set by the 2014 Farm Bill. The reference price for corn is $3.70/bu., soybeans is $8.40/bu., and wheat is $5.50/bu. Reference prices for other crops and additional ARCPLC program data can be found at www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.

ARC payments are earned for a specific crop if there is a loss in revenue. Revenue calculations take into account both price and yield. In the case of ARC-County (CO), the county average yield is used along with the national average marketing price to determine both the expected or "benchmark" revenue (based on a historical 5-year Olympic average), the guaranteed revenue (86% of the benchmark) and the actual revenue in a specific year. Payments for a crop are earned if the **county** actual revenue is less than the **county** guaranteed revenue, and the participating farm has base acres for the crop with a revenue loss.

It is important to recognize that ARC-CO payment rates from one county to the next may vary significantly since these calculations are based on county specific data. In addition, certain counties may have crops that qualify to have revenue losses calculated separately for irrigated and non-irrigated acres. In these cases, a "Historical Irrigated Percentage" or HIP, is used to determine the number of crop base acres that will be paid at the irrigated rate, and the number of crop base acres that will be paid at the non-irrigated rate, as applicable. Counties that do not qualify for a HIP designation will have revenues blended from irrigated and non-irrigated acres of a crop to determine the payment rate per acre. ARC-CO payments are determined by the county where the FSA farm records are carried, rather than the physical location of the farm.

For farms enrolled in ARC-Individual (IC), the individual farm yield, along with the national average marketing price, is used to determine the benchmark, guaranteed and actual revenue. ARC-IC is a "whole farm revenue" program, so losses in revenue are calculated taking into account all covered commodities actually planted on the ARC-IC farm in a specific year.

Review FSA Farm Records

Accurately representing your farming operation to FSA is critical to ensure that eligibility for program benefits is properly evaluated for all programs in which you participate, and any earned payments are issued to the appropriate producers on the farm. Be sure to report any land changes from year to year due to buying, selling, leasing (including sub-leasing), or breaking out new land. Changes to a farming operation may result in a reconstitution, (i.e., combination or division) of the existing FSA farm structure. In cases where a farm division occurs, base acres may be divided by one of the following methods: 1) estate, 2) designation by landowner, 3) DCP cropland percentage (tract divisions only), or 4) default method.

August 1, 2015 is the deadline to request a reconstitution for 2015 and future crop years. This is also the deadline to request a farm transfer from one FSA administrative county to another. All reconstitutions or farm transfers requested after the deadline will be completed for the 2016 crop year.

The 2014 Farm Bill provided producers the opportunity to update Price Loss Coverage (PLC) yields for base crops on a farm. PLC yields were updated at the farm level and the farm level yield was then assigned to each associated tract within the farm. Landowners may request that these individual tract yields be adjusted to more accurately reflect the cultural practice or productivity for each tract. Adjustments to tract level yields cannot change the overall farm level yield. The request to adjust the tract level PLC yields must be agreed to by all owners of the affected tracts. Requests for PLC yield adjustments must be submitted by August 1, 2015 to be effective for the 2014 and 2015 program years.

2015 and 2016 Acreage Reporting Dates

Producers must file an accurate crop acreage certification by the applicable deadlines to maintain eligibility for most FSA programs. These include the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs (ARCPLC), the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Marketing Assistance Loans

(MAL's), the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) and the Livestock Forage Program (LFP). Acreage reports are also important to establish cropping history for future program uses. The following acreage reporting dates are applicable for Nebraska:

- July 15, 2015 - Spring seeded crops, CRP, and all other crops for the 2015 crop year
- November 16, 2015 -Fall seeded crops and perennial forage for the 2016 crop year
- January 2, 2016 - Initial reports of honey bee colonies and locations for the 2016 crop year

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) participants must report acreage according to their policy requirements. Producers are encouraged to submit 2016 perennial forage reports at the time the 2015 spring planted crops are reported. A waiver of the late -filed fee has been authorized for 2015 crops reported after July 15, but before September 30, 2015. This waiver does not supersede acreage reporting requirements set forth by your crop insurance policy or NAP policy.

If a weather-related event has caused the inability to plant an intended crop or has caused a planted crop to fail, it is important to report these claims to both FSA and your crop insurance provider timely. A prevented planting claim must be submitted within 15 calendar days of the final planting date for the crop. Failed acreage on crops covered by the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) must be filed within 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent. In all other cases, the failed acreage must be reported prior to disposition of the crop. For hand harvested crops, producers must notify the County Office within 72 hours of the loss or damage becomes apparent. It is also important to report any revisions to acres, crops, share arrangements or producers on the farm, after the report has been certified with FSA.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) Coverage

Greater protection is now available from the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) for crops that traditionally have been ineligible for federal crop insurance. The new options, created by the 2014 Farm Bill, provide greater coverage for losses when natural disasters affect specialty crops such as vegetables, fruits, perennial and annual forage crops.

Previously, the program offered coverage at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production. You can now choose higher levels of coverage, up to 65 percent of their expected production at 100 percent of the average market price.

The expanded protection will be especially helpful to beginning and traditionally underserved producers, as well as farmers with limited resources, who receive fee waivers and premium reductions for expanded coverage.

The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program has a new web tool, available at www.fsa.usda.gov/nap, allowing producers the ability to determine whether their crops are eligible for coverage. It also gives them an opportunity to explore a variety of options and levels to determine the best protection level for their operation.

Sales Closing Dates for 2016 NAP Crops

- September 1, 2015 - Value loss crops, nursery crops, turfgrass sod, Christmas trees, and aquaculture
- September 30, 2015 - Fall seeded annual crops (i.e. rye, wheat, triticale)
- December 1, 2015 - Honey, apples, cherries, plums, strawberries, asparagus, and grapes
- March 15, 2016 - Alfalfa, mixed forage, spring seeded annual crops (i.e. barley, oats, vegetables), grass, and sorghum forage

Impacts of Breaking Native Sod

The 2014 Farm Bill contains special provisions related to native sod being brought into production in the states of Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, South Dakota, and North Dakota. These provisions provide that native sod converted to production agriculture after February 7, 2014, will be subject to the following for the first four years of cropping: 1) reduced guarantee for crop insurance; 2) reduced premium subsidy for crop insurance; 3) reduced guarantee for the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP); and 4) increased service fees for NAP policies involving the native sod acres.

Crop insurance guarantees on native sod acres will be based on 65% of the transitional yield and the premium subsidy for the native sod acres will be reduced by 50%. With regard to NAP policies for crops grown on native sod acres, the guarantee will be based on 65% of the transitional yield and the service fee for the NAP policy will be doubled. These limitations in guarantees, premium subsidy, and service fees apply for the first four years of cropping on the native sod acres. After four years of cropping, the native sod is treated as traditional acres for crop insurance and NAP purposes.

2016 Margin Protection Program for Dairy Producers (MPP-Dairy) Registration and Election

MPP-Dairy offers protection to dairy producers when the difference (the margin) between the national all-milk price and national average feed cost falls below a certain producer selected amount.

An eligible dairy operation registers for MPP-Dairy only once and results in a contract with a multi-year obligation. Once an eligible operation has registered, they are assessed an annual administrative fee of $100. Annually, eligible dairy operations can select higher levels of coverage by paying an additional premium. Producers in the dairy operation can select a desired coverage level ranging from $4.00 to $8.00 margins, in $0.50 increments and a desired coverage of production percentage level ranging from 25 to 90 percent, in 5 percent increments. If a higher level of coverage is not selected, the dairy operation is covered at the catastrophic (CAT) level of $4.00 margin and 90 percent of production. Dairy producers will have to decide whether to participate in the MPP-Dairy Program or the Livestock Gross Margin (LGM) Program administered by the Risk Management Agency (RMA), but are not allowed to participate in both programs.

The registration and election period for 2016 MPP-Dairy ends September 30, 2015. Twenty-five percent of the premium for higher levels of coverage for 2016 is due February 1, 2016 and the remaining 75 percent of the premium is due June 1, 2016. The 2016 administrative fee is due September 30, 2015.

A decision tool is available to assist with coverage level decisions. The tool can be found on the FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov on the Dairy Margin Protection Program page.

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

ELAP provides emergency assistance to eligible livestock, honeybee, and farm-raised fish producers who have losses due to disease, adverse weather or other conditions, such as blizzards 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), loss of purchased feed and/or mechanically harvested feed due to an eligible adverse weather event, and additional cost of transporting water because of an eligible drought.

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 Colony Collapse Disorder (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, 2014 to September 30, 2015 must file:

- A notice of loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent or by November 1, 2015
- An application for payment by November 1, 2015

ELAP disaster funding is capped nationally at $20 million per federal fiscal year. Payment factors are determined after the completion of each program year.

Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)

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 but not limited to losses due to floods, blizzards, wildfires, extreme heat or extreme cold.

For 2015, eligible losses must occur on or after January 1, 2015, and before December 31, 2015. A notice of loss must be filed within 30 days of when the loss of livestock is apparent or no later than January 30, 2016. Participants must provide the following supporting documentation and the application for payment to their local FSA Office no later than January 30, 2016:

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

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

The 2014 Farm Bill released most of the changes to Conservation Reserve Programs offering producers and landowners the following incentives and opportunities to continually offer their land into CRP:

General CRP Signup: The next general CRP signup for landowners to offer new land or reenroll their land in 2016 is scheduled to be held from December 1, 2015 through February 26, 2016.

1-Year Extensions: One year extensions are being offered to certain CRP participants under a general signup CRP contract expiring September 30, 2015. Eligible participants will have the option to extend all or a portion of the acreage expiring from June 22, 2015 through August 28, 2015. Contracts expiring on September 30, 2015 that have been in CRP for 15 years will not be offered a 1-year extension.

CRP Soil Rental Rate (SRR) Increases: CRP Soil Rental Rates have been reviewed and updated providing producers a higher rental rate when enrolling eligible land into Continuous CRP. The maximum CRP soil rental rates are calculated using the three predominant soil types that make up the offered area. Producers shall continue to enroll environmental sensitive land into continuous CRP practices such as grass waterways, field windbreaks and shelterbelts, filter strips, farmable wetlands and State Acres for Wildlife Habitat.

Transitional Incentive Program (TIP): The 2014 Farm Bill authorized $33 million for the Transitional Incentive Program (TIP) and included the opportunity for military veterans to participate. TIP allows for a farmer or rancher that are planning to retire from farming or ranching to rent their expiring CRP to a military veteran, beginning, limited resource or targeted underserved farmer or rancher with a 5-year agreement and receive an additional two years of CRP annual rental payments. Land must be returned to sustainable grazing or crop production.

CRP Grassland Reserve Program: The 2014 Farm Bill included 2,000,000 acres to be allocated to the CRP Grassland Reserve Program. Additional information regarding the new grassland program is expected to be announced soon.

Individual questions on CRP can be addressed by contacting your local FSA Office.

Continuous CRP Signup – Farmable Wetlands Programs

Did the abundant spring rains cause parts of your fields to be difficult or impossible to plant? If the answer is yes, you should consider CRP Continuous signup practice CP27, Farmable Wetland, and CP28, Farmable Wetlands Buffer. Acceptable wetlands are limited to 40 acres in size. Both the wetland(s) and a buffer up to 4 to 1 must be offered. The purpose of this practice is to restore the wetland functions and values that have been devoted to agricultural use. Hydrology and vegetation must be restored to the maximum extent possible as determined by USDA. This practice needs to be established on eligible cropland (cropped 3 out of 10 previous years). CRP program benefits include:

- Calculated annual rental rates plus an additional 20 percent incentive.
- Fifty percent cost share of eligible costs to establish the practice
- Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) of 40 percent of eligible costs
- Signing Incentive Payment (SIP) calculated at $100 per acre paid up front.

Environmentally sensitive land devoted to certain conservation practices may be enrolled in CRP at any time under continuous signup. Offers are automatically accepted provided the land and producers meet certain eligibility requirements. Offers for continuous signup are not subject to competitive bidding. Continuous signup contracts are 10 to 15 years in duration. CRP soil rental rates have recently been updated to make CRP competitive with other programs and economically viable for producers. If interested, additional information is available at https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/ or contact your local FSA Office.

Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)

The Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) helps farmers and ranchers repair damage to farmlands caused by natural disasters and provide assistance to repair the damaged farmland.

Cass, Dawes, Gage, Jefferson, Lancaster, Saline and Thayer counties have been approved to implement ECP to assist producers in rehabilitating farmland caused by flooding and McPherson county was approved to implement ECP for fire damage. Producers who suffered a loss in the counties approved for ECP shall contact their local FSA Office and request assistance. The signup period is a 60-day signup set by the local FSA County Committee. Producers may be eligible to receive 75 percent of the eligible cost of restoration not to exceed $200,000 per natural disaster to assist in rehabilitating farmland. Eligible practices include debris removal; grading, shaping, re-leveling or similar measures; restoring permanent fences and restoring conservation structures. For additional information regarding ECP, visit http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/.

Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL) and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP)

MAL's and LDP's provide financing and marketing assistance for wheat, feed grains, soybeans, and other oilseeds, pulse crops, wool and honey. MAL's provide producers interim financing after harvest to help them meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows. A producer who is eligible to obtain a loan, but agrees to forgo the loan, may obtain an LDP if such a payment is available.

To be considered eligible for an LDP, producers must contact their local FSA Office before losing beneficial interest in the crop.

FSA will accept MAL requests and LDP requests, if available, following the harvest of the crop for 2015 crops until the following deadlines:

- January 31, 2016 – mohair, unshorn pelts (LDP only), and wool
- March 31, 2016 – barley, canola, crambe, flaxseed, honey, oats, rapeseed, wheat and sesame seed
- May 31, 2016 – corn, dry peas, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, safflower seed, chickpeas, soybeans and sunflower seed

Farm Ownership Loan Financing Availability

FSA has adequate direct farm ownership loan funding available for beginning and existing farmers and ranchers who want to purchase farm real estate, construct farm buildings or make farm improvements. The maximum loan amount for a direct farm ownership loan is $300,000. Farm ownership loans are available with interest rates starting as low as 1.5% for down-payment loans and 2.5% for joint financing loans. Repayment terms for loans vary depending on the type of loan and the borrower's ability to repay the loan, but loan terms will not exceed 40 years. In order to qualify for an FSA loan, the applicant must substantially participate in the farm operation, meet a test for credit eligibility requirement and be able to provide a feasible cash flow projection that shows repayment of the requested loan. FSA also has a guaranteed farm ownership loan program with a loan limit of $1,392,000, which is financed through a commercial lender and guaranteed by FSA. For additional information regarding FSA's farm loan programs, financing options and eligibility information, please contact your local FSA Office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

Microloan (ML) Program

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) developed the ML program to better serve the unique financial operating needs of beginning, niche and other family farm operations. This loan program will also be useful to specialty crop producers and operators of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). Eligible applicants can apply for a maximum amount of $50,000 to pay for initial start-up expenses such as hoop houses to extend the growing season, essential tools, irrigation and annual expenses such as seed, fertilizer, utilities, land rents, marketing, and distribution expenses. For more information contact your local FSA Office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

Beginning Farmer Loans

FSA assists beginning farmers to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:

- Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years
- Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm
- Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA
- Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's average size farm.

Additional program information, loan applications, and other materials are available at your local USDA Service Center. You may also visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

Loans for Targeted Underserved Producers

FSA has a number of loan programs available to assist applicants to begin or continue in agriculture production. Loans are available for operating type loans and/or purchase or improve farms or ranches. While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, the FSA has provided priority funding for members of underserved groups. A targeted underserved applicant is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of his or her identity as members of the group without regard to his or her individual qualities. For purposes of this program, targeted underserved groups 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.

Farm Storage Facility Loan Program (FSFL)

The FSFL program allows producers of eligible commodities to obtain low-interest financing to build or upgrade farm storage and handling facilities. The maximum FSFL loan amount is $500,000 per loan. Participants are required to provide a down payment of 15 percent, with Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) providing a loan for the remaining 85 percent of the net cost of the eligible storage facility, permanent drying and handling equipment. Loan terms of 7, 10 or 12 years are available depending on the amount of the loan. FSFL security requirements have been eased for loans in the amount of $100,000 and less. Eligible commodities include grains, oilseeds, peanuts, pulse crops, hay, honey, renewable biomass commodities, fruits and vegetables. Qualified facilities include grain bins, grain handling and drying equipment, hay storage sheds, cold storage facilities and handling equipment for fruits and vegetables. Specialty crop fruit and vegetable growers can also use the FSFL loan program for sorting bins, wash stations and other food safety-related equipment. For more information about the FSFL loan program, please contact your local FSA Office.

Youth Project Loans

The Farm Service Agency makes loans to youth to establish and operate agricultural income-producing projects in connection with 4-H clubs, FFA and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is $5,000. For more information about Youth Loans, contact your local FSA Office.

Emergency Loans (EM)

FSA provides emergency loans (EM) to help producers who own or operate in a county declared by the President or designated by the Secretary of Agriculture as a primary disaster area. All counties contiguous to the disaster county are also eligible for Emergency loans. Emergency loan funds may be used to restore or replace essential property, pay production costs and personal living expenses associated with the disaster year, reorganize the farming operation and to refinance certain debts. Certain eligibility requirements apply including having suffered a qualifying loss and being unable to receive commercial credit from commercial sources. The loan amount is based on the amount of loss up to $500,000. Applications for emergency loans must be received within eight months of the county's disaster or designation date. Producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA Office to learn more about emergency loans and the information needed for a complete application.

County Committee (COC) Nomination Period

It is important for county committees to reflect America's diversity. All eligible farmers and ranchers, including beginning farmers are encouraged to get involved in this year's elections. FSA has seen an increase in the number of nominations for qualified candidates, especially among women and underserved producers .

To be eligible to serve on a FSA county committee, a person must participate or cooperate in an agency administered program, be eligible to vote in a county committee election and reside in the local administrative area where they are nominated.

Farmers and ranchers may nominate themselves or others. Organizations representing minorities and women also may nominate candidates. To become a candidate, an eligible individual must sign an FSA-669A nomination form. The form and other information about FSA county committee elections are available at www.fsa.usda.gov/elections. Nomination forms for the 2015 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA Service Center by close of business on August 3, 2015**.**

FSA will mail election ballots to eligible voters beginning November 9, 2015. Ballots will be due back to the local county office either via mail or in person by December 7, 2015. Newly elected committee members and alternates will take office on January 1, 2016.

While FSA county committees do not approve or deny farm ownership or operating loans, they make decisions on disaster and conservation programs, emergency programs, commodity price support loan programs and other agricultural issues. Members serve three-year terms. Nationwide, there are about 7,800 farmers and ranchers serving on FSA county committees. Committees consist of three to seven members that are elected by eligible farmers, ranchers and landowners.

New Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Website

USDA unveiled www.USDA.gov/newfarmers, a new website that provides a centralized, one-stop resource where beginning farmers and ranchers can explore the variety of USDA initiatives designed to help them succeed. This website provides in depth information for new farmers and ranchers, including: how to increase access to land and capital; build new market opportunities; participate in conservation opportunities; select and use the right risk management tools; and access USDA education, and technical support programs. These issues have been identified as top priorities by new farmers. The website also features instructive case studies about beginning farmers who have successfully utilized USDA resources to start or expand their business operations.

GovDelivery – Electronic Notice of Information

Nebraska farmers, ranchers and landowners are asked to enroll in the GovDelivery system which provides email notices, newsletters and electronic reminders. FSA, like most other organizations, is trying to work smarter and be more efficient. Moving to electronic notifications via email helps conserve resources and save taxpayer dollars. County Committee ballots will continue to be mailed to all eligible producers. Producers can subscribe to receive free e-mail updates by going to http://www.fsa.usda.gov/subscribe or by providing your local FSA office your email address.

Receipt for Services

Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds agricultural producers that FSA provides a receipt to customers who request or receive assistance or information on FSA programs.

As part of FSA's mission to provide enhanced customer service, producers who visit FSA will receive documentation of services requested and provided. From December through June, FSA issued more than 327,000 electronic receipts.

The 2014 Farm Bill requires a receipt to be issued for any agricultural program assistance requested from FSA, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Rural Development (RD). Receipts include the date, summary of the visit and any agricultural information, program and/or loan assistance provided to an individual or entity.

In some cases, a form or document – such as a completed and signed program enrollment form –serve as the customer receipt instead of a printed or electronic receipt. A service is any information, program or loan assistance provided whether through a visit, email, fax or letter.

To learn more about FSA, visit www.fsa.usda.gov or to find your local USDA Office, visit http://offices.usda.gov.

July Program Interest Rates

Rates subject to change monthly. Contact your local FSA Office to obtain current interest rates.

Farm Operating: 2.500%
Microloan: 2.500%
Farm Ownership: 3.750%
Farm Ownership - Joint Financing: 2.500%
Farm Ownership - Down Payment: 1.500%
Emergency - Actual Loss: 3.500%
Farm Storage Facility Loan -7 year term: 2.000%
Farm Storage Facility Loan -10 year term: 2.250%
Farm Storage Facility Loan -12 year term: 2.375%
Commodity Loan: 1.250%

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Dates to Remember	
August 1, 2015	Deadline to request a reconstitution or farm transfer for 2015
August 3, 2015	Deadline to submit nominations (FSA-669A) for COC elections
September 1, 2015	2016 sales closing date for value loss crops, nursery crops, turfgrass sod, Christmas trees, and aquaculture (NAP)
September 30, 2015	Deadline to enroll into 2014/2015 ARCPLC Programs Deadline to register and elect buy-up coverage for 2016 MPP-Dairy Program Deadline to file a 2015 acreage report without a late-filed fee 2016 sales closing date for fall-seeded annual crops (NAP)
November 2, 2015	Deadline to submit 2015 ELAP application for payment and supporting documentation
November 16, 2015	Deadline to report 2016 perennial forage or fall-seeded crops
December 1, 2015	2016 sales closing date for honey, apples, cherries, plums, strawberries, asparagus, and grapes (NAP)
December 7, 2015	Deadline for ballots postmarked or returned to County Office for COC elections
January 4, 2016	2016 initial reports for honeybee colonies and locations
February 1, 2016	Deadline to submit 2015 LIP application for payment and supporting documentation
February 1, 2016	Deadline to request 2015 MAL or LDP for mohair, unshorn pelts (LDP Only), and wool
March 15, 2016	2016 sales closing date for alfalfa, mixed forage, spring-seeded annual crops, grass, and sorghum forage (NAP)
March 31, 2016	Deadline to request 2015 MAL or LDP for barley, canola, crambe, flaxseed, honey, oats, rapeseed, wheat, and sesame seed
May 31, 2016	Deadline to request 2015 MAL or LDP for corn, dry peas, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, safflower seed, chickpeas, soybeans, sunflower seed