

December 2019



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

# NEWSLETTER

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## Arkansas FSA Newsletter

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### Arkansas Farm Service Agency

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Little Rock, Arkansas 72201  
Phone: 501-301-3000  
[www.fsa.usda.gov/ar](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ar)

#### State Committee:

**Chairman:** Ron Chastain

**Members:** Gary Churchill,  
Sarah Dunklin, Nathan Reed,  
& Vivian Wright

#### State Committee Meeting:

2nd Wednesday and  
Thursday of each Quarter

#### State Executive Director:

David Curtis

#### Executive Officer:

James Culpepper

### Message from the SED

Enrollment is open for the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs. Signup for the 2019 crop year ends March 15, 2020 and signup for the 2020 crop year ends June 30, 2020. Producers may enroll for both 2019 and 2020 during the same visit to an FSA county office.

Due to prolonged and extensive weather events this year, the deadline for the [Dairy Margin Coverage](#) (DMC) program (for 2020) has been extended to December 20.

Signup opened for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) on December 9, 2019. The deadline to sign up for general CRP is February 28, 2020, while signup for continuous CRP is ongoing.

For additional questions and assistance, contact your local USDA service center. To locate your local FSA office, visit [farmers.gov/service-locator](http://farmers.gov/service-locator).

As the Holiday Season is upon us, Arkansas FSA would like to extend best wishes to all. Have a safe Holiday Season and we wish you a New Year full of success. We value our relationship with all our customers and look forward to working with you in the future.

**Administrative Officer:**  
Sharon Baker

**Farm Programs:**  
Terri McManus

**Farm Loan Programs:**  
Lori Lavender

Please contact your local FSA Office for questions specific to your operation or county. To find contact information for your local office go to [www.fsa.usda.gov/ar](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ar).

## Upcoming Events and Workshops

The USDA Arkansas Farm Service Agency (FSA) is committed to educating producers on available programs and loans. FSA representatives will be available at the following workshops and conferences. Producers interested in attending these conferences/workshops should follow the registration or RSVP instructions listed below.

### **Dec. 16th – 17th – National Black Growers Council (NBGC) Annual Meeting**

NBGC is hosting their Annual Meeting and Conference at the Downtown Hyatt Regency Hotel in Atlanta, Georgia. **FSA will have an informational Booth and Employees will be available to discuss programs and answer questions.** The conference will be held on December 16-17, 2019. For more information and to register online, please visit [www.NationalBlackGrowersCouncil.com](http://www.NationalBlackGrowersCouncil.com).

### **Jan. 17<sup>th</sup> – ALFDC/ALCDC Annual Winter Farmers & Community Development Conference**

Arkansas Land and Farm Development Corporation (ALFDC) and Arkansas Land and Community Development Corporation (ALCDC) will host their Annual Winter Farmers & Community Development Conference on Friday, January 17, 2020. **FSA will present on FSA Programs.** The meeting is free to attend. The conference will be held on the ALCDC campus located at 484 Floyd Brown Drive in Fargo. Registration starts at 8:30am. Lunch will be served. For additional information contact Mary Harris or Tameecia Patterson at (870)734-3005.

### **Jan. 23<sup>rd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> - Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (SAWG) Conference**

Southern SAGW is hosting their Annual Conference in Little Rock, Arkansas. **Rhonda O'Guinn, Arkansas' Outreach Coordinator, will manage the FSA Information Booth.** The Conference will be held January 23 – 25, 2020 at the Statehouse Convention Center. Register now with secure and convenient online registration system: [ssawgconference.org/tradeshows](https://ssawgconference.org/tradeshows). **Contact Jessa Turner at: [tradeshows@ssawg.org](mailto:tradeshows@ssawg.org) or 859.433.5224 for additional information.**

**Feb 21<sup>st</sup> - Rural Life Conference** The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff is hosting the 2020 Rural Life Conference. The conference will be held Friday, Feb. 21, 2020, and is free to farmers and homemakers. **FSA will have an Information Booth and will present on FSA Programs.** Registration begins at 7:30 a.m. and the opening session begins at 8:45 a.m. The conference will be held at the Pine Bluff Convention Center, One Convention Center Drive in Pine Bluff. Additional Information will be forthcoming.

### **Mar 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> - Arkansas Women in Agriculture Conference**

Arkansas Women in Agriculture is hosting the 2020 ARWIA Conference. **FSA will have an Information Booth and will present on Disaster Programs.** The conference will be held Tuesday-Wednesday, Mar. 17-18, 2020. The conference will be held at the Airport Holiday Inn, 3201 Bankhead Drive, Little Rock, AR, 72206, Little Rock, Arkansas. For additional information and to register, please visit: <http://arwomeninag.org/>

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## USDA Extends Deadlines for Dairy Margin Coverage Program and Market Facilitation Program to Dec. 20, 2019

*New Signup Deadline is December 20*

Due to the prolonged and extensive impacts of weather events this year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today extended the deadline to December 20 for producers to enroll in the [Dairy Margin Coverage](#) (DMC) program for the 2020 calendar year. The deadline had been December 13. USDA announced is also continuing to accept applications for the [Market Facilitation Program](#) through December 20.

2019 has challenged the country's ag sector – prevented or late planting followed by a delayed harvest has been further complicated by wet and cold weather. Because many producers are still in the field, time to conduct business at the local USDA office is at a premium. USDA hopes this deadline extension will allow producers the opportunity to participate in these important programs.

Authorized by the 2018 Farm Bill and available through USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), the program offers reasonably priced protection to dairy producers when the difference between the all-milk price and the average feed cost (the margin) falls below a certain dollar amount selected by the producer.

The Market Facilitation Program is part of a relief strategy to support American agricultural producers while the Administration continues to work on free, fair, and reciprocal trade deals to open more markets to help American farmers compete globally. MFP payments are aimed at assisting farmers suffering from damage due to unjustified trade retaliation by foreign nations.

For more information, visit the [DMC webpage](#), the [MFP webpage](#) or your local [USDA service center](#). To locate your local FSA office, visit [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator).

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## USDA Announces Opening Signup for Conservation Reserve Program on December 9, 2019

USDA is opening signup for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) on December 9, 2019. The deadline for agricultural producers to sign up for general CRP is February 28, 2020, while signup for continuous CRP is ongoing.

Farmers and ranchers who enroll in CRP receive a yearly rental payment for voluntarily establishing long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as "covers") to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat on marginally productive agricultural lands.

CRP has 22 million acres enrolled, but the 2018 Farm Bill lifted the cap to 27 million acres. This means farmers and ranchers have a chance to enroll in CRP for the first time or continue their participation for another term.

By enrolling in CRP, producers are improving water quality, reducing soil erosion, and restoring habitat for wildlife. This in turn spurs hunting, fishing, recreation, tourism, and other economic development across rural America.

### CRP Enrollment Options

#### *General Signup*

CRP general signup will be held annually. The competitive general signup will now include increased opportunities for enrollment of wildlife habitat through the State Acres For Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) initiative.

### *Continuous Signup*

While some practices under SAFE will remain available through continuous signup, CRP continuous signup will focus primarily on water quality with the Clean Lakes, Estuaries, and Rivers (CLEAR) Initiative. The 2018 Farm Bill prioritizes water quality practices such as contour grass strips, filter strips, riparian buffers, wetlands and a new prairie strip.

USDA will also be working with Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) partners to relaunch CREP continuous options in each state under new statutory provisions. CREP will continue to target high-priority local, state or regional conservation concerns.

### *Grasslands Signups*

CRP Grasslands signup helps landowners and operators protect grassland, including rangeland, and pastureland and certain other lands while maintaining the areas as grazing lands. A separate CRP Grasslands signup will be offered each year following general signup.

### *Pilot Programs*

Later in 2020, (FSA will roll out pilot programs within CRP: CLEAR 30, which allows contracts expiring with CLEAR practices to be reenrolled in 30-year contracts and in the Soil Health and Income Protection Program (SHIPP) in the prairie pothole region. More information on these programs will be announced in the new year.

### *Land Transition*

The CRP Transition Incentives Program (TIP) is an option for producers interested in transitioning land to a beginning farmer or rancher or a member of a socially disadvantaged group to return land to production for sustainable grazing or crop production. CRP contract holders no longer need to be a retired or retiring owner or operator to transition their land. TIP participants may have a lease less than five years with an option to purchase, and they have two years before the end of the CRP contract to make conservation and land improvements.

### **Previously Expired Land**

Land enrolled in CRP under a 15-year contract that expired in September 2017, 2018 or 2019, may be eligible for enrollment if there was no opportunity for re-enrollment and the practice under the expired contract has been maintained.

### **CRP Rates and Payments**

FSA recently posted updated soil rental rates for CRP. County average rates are posted on the [CRP Statistics webpage](#). Soil rental rates are statutorily prorated at 90 percent for continuous signup and 85 percent for general signup. The rental rates will be assessed annually. Under continuous signup, producers also receive incentives, including a signup incentive payment and a practice incentive payment.

To enroll in CRP, contact your local FSA county office or visit [fsa.usda.gov/crp](https://fsa.usda.gov/crp). To locate your local FSA office, visit [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator).

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## **USDA Safety Net Program Enrollment Opens for 2019 and 2020**

Agricultural producers now can enroll in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs – two U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) safety net programs – for the 2019 and 2020 crop year.

ARC provides income support payments on historical base acres when actual crop revenue declines below a specified guaranteed level. PLC provides income support payments on historical base acres when the effective price for a covered commodity falls below its reference price. The 2018 Farm Bill reauthorized and updated both programs.

Signup for the 2019 crop year closes March 15, 2020, while signup for the 2020 crop year closes June 30, 2020. Producers who have not yet enrolled for 2019 can enroll for both 2019 and 2020 during the same visit to an FSA county office.

ARC and PLC have options for the farm operator who is actively farming the land as well as the owner of the land. Farm owners also have a one-time opportunity to update PLC payment yields beginning with crop year 2020. If the farm owner and producer visit the FSA county office together, FSA can also update yield information during that visit.

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 and short grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

### **2018 Crop Year ARC and PLC Payments**

FSA began processing payments last week for 2018 ARC-County (ARC-CO) and PLC on covered commodities that met payment triggers on enrolled farms in the 2018 crop year. In addition to the \$1.5 billion now in process, FSA anticipates it will issue another \$1 billion in November once USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service publishes additional commodity prices for the 2018 crop.

Producers who had 2018 covered commodities enrolled in ARC-CO can visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc) for payment rates applicable to their county and each covered commodity. For farms and covered commodities enrolled in 2018 PLC, the following crops met payment triggers: barley, canola, corn, dry peas, grain sorghum, lentils, peanuts, large chickpeas, sunflower seed, flaxseed, rapeseed, seed cotton, long grain rice, medium/short grain rice and wheat.

Oats, small chickpeas, mustard seed, safflower, crambe, sesame seed and soybeans did not meet 2018 PLC payment triggers.

2018 PLC payment rates for the following covered commodities have not been determined: temperate Japonica rice.

### **More Information**

For more information on ARC and PLC including two online decision tools that assist producers in making enrollment and election decisions specific to their operations, visit the [ARC and PLC webpage](#).

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## **Reminder to FSA Direct and Guaranteed Borrowers with Real Estate Security**

Farm Service Agency would like to remind farm loan borrowers who have pledged real estate as security for their loans, of key items for maintaining loan collateral. It is required that borrowers must obtain prior consent, or approval, by either FSA, for direct loans, or by a guaranteed lender, for any transaction affecting real estate security. Examples of these transactions include, but are not limited to:

- Leases of any kind;
- Easements of any kind;
- Subordinations;
- Partial releases, and

- Sales

Failure to meet or follow the requirements set forth in the loan agreement, promissory note, and other security instruments could lead to nonmonetary default which could jeopardize your current and future loans.

It is critical that borrowers keep an open line of communication with their FSA loan staff or guaranteed lender when it comes to changes in their operation. For more information on borrower responsibilities, read [Your FSA Farm Loan Compass](#). **Submit Loan Requests for Financing Early**

The Farm Loan team is already working on operating loans for spring 2020 so it is important that potential borrowers submit their requests early so they can be timely processed. The farm loan team can help determine which loan programs are best for applicants.

FSA offers a wide range of low-interest loans that can meet the financial needs of any farm operation for just about any purpose. The traditional **farm operating and farm ownership loans** can help large and small farm operations take advantage of early purchasing discounts for spring inputs as well expenses throughout the year.

**Microloans** are a simplified loan program that will provide up to \$50,000 for both Farm Ownership and Operating Microloans to eligible applicants. These loans, targeted for smaller operations and non-traditional operations, can be used for operating expenses, starting a new agricultural enterprise, purchasing equipment, and other needs associated with a farming operation. The Farm Loan Program staff in any County FSA office can provide more details on farm operating and microloans and provide loan applications. Loans to beginning farmers and members of underserved groups are a priority.

Other types of loans available include:

**Marketing Assistance Loans** allow producers to use eligible commodities as loan collateral and obtain a 9-month loan while the crop is in storage. These loans provide cash flow to the producer and allow them to market the crop when prices may be more advantageous.

**Farm Storage Facility Loans** can be used to build permanent structures used to store eligible commodities, or for storage and handling trucks, or portable or permanent handling equipment. A variety of structures are eligible under this loan, including bunker silos, grain bins, hay storage structures and refrigerated structures for vegetables and fruit. A producer may borrow up to \$500,000 per loan.

For additional questions and assistance, contact your local USDA service center. To locate your local FSA office, visit [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator).

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## 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 \$1,776,000. 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.

## Save Time – Make an Appointment with FSA

Producers are encouraged to call their local FSA office to schedule an appointment to ensure maximum use of their time and to make sure FSA staff is available to tend to their important business needs. Please call your local FSA office ahead of your visit to set an appointment and to discuss any records or documentation that might be needed during your appointment. To find your local FSA office, visit: <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>.

## Rates and Dates

Selected Interest Rates for December 2019		Dates to Remember	
90-Day Treasury Bill	1.750	12/2/19	COC Election Voting Ends
Farm Operating Loans — Direct	2.500	12/15/19	Final date to report, wheat, oats and small grain crops
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct	3.125	12/15/19	Final date to file prevented planted acreage for wheat & oats
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.500	12/20/19	Extended deadline for Dairy Margin Coverage
Emergency Loans	3.500	12/20/19	Market Facilitation Program extended deadline
Farm Storage Facility Loans (3 years)	1.625	12/31/19	NAP mixed forage acreage reporting deadline
Farm Storage Facility Loans (10 years)	1.875	1/01/20	Newly Elected COC Members take Office
Commodity Loans 1996-Present	2.625	1/02/2020	Final date to report Honey
		12/9/19 thru 2/28/2020	General CRP sign-up (54)
		12/9/19 thru 8/21/2020	Continuous CRP sign-up (53)
		3/15/2020	2019 ARCPLC election & enrollment deadline
		6/30/2020	2020 ARCPLC enrollment and yield update deadline

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).

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in this meeting/function/event should contact their local County Executive Director or Sharon Baker at 501-301-3014, (TDD# or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339, and [Sharon.Baker@ar.usda.gov](mailto:Sharon.Baker@ar.usda.gov)).