A Message from the Newly Appointed State Executive Director - Clarice Navarro-Ratzlaff

On November 13, 2017, I was appointed State Executive Director (SED) for the Colorado Farm Service Agency (FSA). Prior to being appointed SED, I was elected to represent House District 47 – covering parts of Pueblo, Fremont and Otero counties in 2012 and was reelected for three terms. I have also worked in the Rural Development (RD) Division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a sister agency to FSA.

I would like to thank Jenny Peterson for her dedication and service the past 10 ½ months while serving as Acting State Executive Director.

I value the Colorado Agricultural Community, along with the hard working FSA employees, who are Ambassadors of the Agency, and play an integral role in getting programs delivered to eligible producers.
My goals are simple, attainable, and they align with the vision that USDA Secretary of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue, has outlined for all of the USDA agencies. We will always be facts-based and data driven, with a decision-making mindset that is customer-focused. Working with all of you to help American agriculture is a dream come true for me and my family.
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.

Transitioning Expiring CRP Land to Beginning, Veteran or Underserved Farmers and Ranchers

Retired or retiring landowners or operators are encouraged to transition their Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres to beginning, veteran or underserved farmers or ranchers through the Transition Incentives Program (TIP). TIP provides annual rental payments to the retiring farmer for up to two additional years after the CRP contract expires, provided the transition is not to a family member.

Enrollment in TIP is on a continuous basis. Beginning, veteran or underserved farmers and ranchers and retiring CRP participants may enroll in TIP beginning one year before the expiration date of the CRP contract or Aug. 15. For example, if a CRP contract is scheduled to expire on Sept. 30, 2018, the land may be offered for enrollment in TIP beginning Oct. 1, 2017, through Aug. 15, 2018. The Aug. 15 deadline allows the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) time to complete the TIP sustainable grazing or crop production conservation plans. The TIP application must be submitted prior to completing the lease or sale of the affected lands.

New landowners or renters must return the land to production using sustainable grazing or farming methods.

For more information on TIP, visit https://www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation.

USDA Processing Pending Conservation Reserve Program Continuous Enrollment Offers

Acceptance of Most 2018 Offers Temporarily Suspended

USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) will process many pending eligible offers for land enrollment in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), and will temporarily suspend accepting most new offers until later in the 2018 fiscal year.

All current, eligible CRP continuous enrollment offers made through Sept. 30, 2017, except for those made under the Pollinator Habitat Initiative (CP42), will be approved. Additionally, FSA is temporarily suspending acceptance of most offers going forward to provide time to review CRP allocation levels, and to avoid exceeding the statutory cap of 24 million acres.

The CRP acreage cap is a provision of the 2014 Farm Bill. Current enrollment is about 23.5 million acres nationwide. USDA is accepting all pending continuous enrollment offers that were made beginning on May 4, 2017, and extending through Sept. 30, 2017, except Pollinator Habitat Initiative offers. Pollinator acreage offers are being declined because the program has met its acreage enrollment goal. Effective immediately, USDA is suspending acceptance of all new CRP continuous offers received or submitted after Sept. 30, 2017. The suspension will continue until later in the 2018 fiscal year.

However, FSA will continue to accept eligible offers for state-specific Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and CRP Grasslands enrollment. Offers received on or after Oct. 1, 2017, are subject to fiscal year 2018 rental rates which have been adjusted to reflect current market conditions and were established after careful review of the latest USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) cash rent data.

In return for enrolling in CRP, USDA, through FSA, provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Landowners enter into contracts that last between 10 and 15 years. CRP pays farmers and ranchers who remove sensitive lands from production and plant certain grasses, shrubs and trees that improve water quality, prevent
soil erosion and increase wildlife habitat. Payment totals for 2017 were announced earlier this week totaling over $1.6 billion.

For more information about CRP, contact your local FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov/crp. To locate your local FSA office, visit http://offices.usda.gov.

**Payments to Deceased Producers**

In order to claim a Farm Service Agency (FSA) payment on behalf of a deceased producer, all program conditions for the payment must have been met before the applicable producer’s date of death.

If a producer earned a FSA payment prior to becoming deceased, the following is the order of precedence of the representatives of the producer:

- administrator or executor of the estate
- the surviving spouse
- surviving sons and daughters, including adopted children
- surviving father and mother
- surviving brothers and sisters
- heirs of the deceased person who would be entitled to payment according to the State law

In order for FSA to release the payment, the legal representative of the deceased producer must file a form FSA-325, to claim the payment for themselves or an estate. The county office will verify and determine that the application, contract, loan agreement, or other similar form requesting payment issuance, was signed by the applicable deadline for such form, by the deceased or a person legally authorized to act on their behalf at that time of application.

If the application, contract or loan agreement form was signed by someone other than the participant who is deceased, FSA will determine whether the person submitting the form has the legal authority to submit the form to compel FSA to pay the deceased participant.

Payments will be issued to the respective representative’s name using the deceased program participant’s tax identification number. Payments made to representatives are subject to offset regulations for debts owed by the deceased.

FSA is not responsible for advising persons in obtaining legal advice on how to obtain program benefits that may be due to a participant who has died, disappeared or who has been declared incompetent.

**Final Planting Dates**

All producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office for more information on the final planting date for specific crops. The final planting dates vary by crop, planting period and county so please contact your local FSA office for a list of county-specific planting deadlines. The timely planting of a crop, by the final planting date, may prevent loss of program benefits.

**2018 Acreage Reporting Dates**

In order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements, all producers are encouraged to visit their local FSA office to file an accurate crop certification report by the applicable deadline.

Acreage reporting dates vary by crop and by county so please contact your local FSA office for a list of county-specific deadlines.

The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:
• If the crop has not been planted by the applicable acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
• If a producer acquires additional acreage after the applicable acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendars days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.
• If a perennial forage crop is reported with the intended use of “cover only,” “green manure,” “left standing,” or “seed,” then the acreage must be reported by July 15th.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP covered crops is the earlier of the applicable dates or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

For questions regarding crop certification and crop loss reports, please contact your local FSA office.

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

The Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybee, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (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, additional cost of transporting water because of an eligible drought and additional cost associated with gathering livestock to treat for cattle tick fever.

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 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 Oct. 1, 2017 to Sept. 30, 2018 must file:

- A notice of loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent or by Nov. 1, 2018
- An application for payment by Nov. 1, 2018

The Farm Bill caps ELAP disaster funding at $20 million per federal fiscal year.

The following ELAP Fact Sheets (by topic) are available online:

- ELAP for Farm-Raised Fish Fact Sheet
- ELAP for Livestock Fact Sheet
- ELAP for Honeybees Fact Sheet

To view these and other FSA program fact sheets, visit the FSA fact sheet web page at [www.fsa.usda.gov/factsheets](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/factsheets).

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**Organic Certification Cost Share Program**

The Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP) provides cost share assistance to producers and handlers of agricultural products who are obtaining or renewing their certification under the National Organic Program (NOP).
Certified operations may receive up to 75 percent of their certification costs paid from Oct. 1, 2016, through Sept. 30, 2017, not to exceed $750 per certification scope.

Eligible costs include application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement/arrangement requirements, travel/per diem for inspectors, user fees, sales assessments and postage.

Ineligible costs include equipment, materials, supplies, transitional certification fees, late fees and inspections necessary to address National Organic Program regulatory violations.

Producers and handlers may submit OCCSP applications to FSA county offices or they may apply through participating State Agencies, which will be listed at https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/occsp/index as their agreements to administer the program are finalized.

The FSA OCCSP application form is available at USDA’s eForms site, by selecting "Browse forms" and entering "OCCSP" in the "title or keywords" field on the search page.

To learn more about organic certification cost share, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/organic or contact a local FSA office by visiting http://offices.usda.gov.

### Changing Bank Accounts

All FSA payments should be electronically transferred into your bank account. In order to make timely payments, you need to notify the office if you close your account or if your bank is purchased by another financial institution. Payments can be delayed if we are not aware of changes to account and routing numbers.

### USDA Issues Safety-Net Payments to Colorado Farmers

USDA Colorado Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that approximately 16,000 Colorado farms that enrolled in safety-net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill will receive financial assistance for the 2016 crop year. The programs, known as Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC), are designed to protect against unexpected drops in crop prices or revenues due to market downturns.

Producers in 61 Colorado counties have experienced a significant drop in prices or revenues below the benchmark established by the ARC or PLC program and thus, will receive payments totaling $143 million. Payments related to corn crops made up much of those payments. There were also payments for barley, canola, lentils, oats, dry peas, grain sorghum, soybeans and wheat crops. Cash flow from these payments is particularly helpful to farmers and ranchers in counties impacted by natural disasters.

Payments by county for an eligible commodity can vary because average county yields will differ.

Statewide, over 5,700 farms participated in ARC-County and nearly 10,300 farms participated in PLC. More details on the price and yield information used to calculate the financing assistance from the safety-net programs is available on the FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc and www.fsa.usda.gov/co

### USDA Announces Enrollment Period for Safety Net Coverage in 2018

FSA today announced that starting Nov. 1, 2017, farmers and ranchers with base acres in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) safety net program may enroll for the 2018 crop year. The enrollment period will end on Aug. 1, 2018.

Since shares and ownership of a farm can change year-to-year, producers must enroll by signing a contract each program year.

The producers on a farm that are not enrolled for the 2018 enrollment period will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs for the 2018 crop should crop prices or farm revenues fall below the historical price or
revenue benchmarks established by the program. Producers who made their elections in previous years must still enroll during the 2018 enrollment period.

The ARC and PLC programs were authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill and offer a safety net to agricultural producers when there is a substantial drop in prices or revenues for covered commodities. Covered commodities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium grain rice (which includes short grain and sweet rice), safflower seed, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat. Upland cotton is no longer a covered commodity. For more details regarding these programs, go to www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.

For more information, producers are encouraged to visit their local FSA office. To find a local FSA office, visit http://offices.usda.gov.

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**FSA Offers Joint Financing Option on Direct Farm Ownership Loans**

The USDA Farm Service Agency’s (FSA) Direct Farm Ownership loans are a resource to help farmers and ranchers become owner-operators of family farms, improve and expand current operations, increase agricultural productivity, and assist with land tenure to save farmland for future generations.

Depending on the applicant’s needs, there are three types of Direct Farm Ownership Loans: regular, down payment and joint financing. FSA also offers a Direct Farm Ownership Microloan option for smaller financial needs up to $50,000.

Joint financing allows FSA to provide more farmers and ranchers with access to capital. FSA lends up to 50 percent of the total amount financed. A commercial lender, a State program or the seller of the property being purchased, provides the balance of loan funds, with or without an FSA guarantee. The maximum loan amount for a Joint Financing loan is $300,000 and the repayment period for the loan is up to 40 years.

To be eligible, the operation must be an eligible farm enterprise. Farm Ownership loan funds cannot be used to finance nonfarm enterprises and all applicants must be able to meet general eligibility requirements. Loan applicants are also required to have participated in the business operations of a farm or ranch for at least three years out of the 10 years prior to the date the application is submitted. The applicant must show documentation that their participation in the business operation of the farm or ranch was not solely as a laborer.

For more information about FSA Loan programs, contact your local FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov. To find your local FSA office, visit http://offices.usda.gov.

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

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

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

Underserved or beginning farmers and ranchers who cannot obtain commercial credit from a bank can apply for either FSA direct loans or guaranteed loans. Direct loans are made to applicants by FSA. Guaranteed loans are made by lending institutions who arrange for FSA to guarantee the loan. FSA can guarantee up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan. The FSA guarantee allows lenders to make agricultural credit available to producers who do not meet the lender’s normal underwriting criteria.

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

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

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

NRCS Accepting Applications to Assists Farmers and Ranchers --- Address Colorado’s Natural Resource Concerns

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Colorado is currently accepting applications for enrollment into the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). EQIP is a voluntary Farm Bill program that provides financial assistance for conservation systems such as animal waste management facilities, irrigation system efficiency improvements, fencing, water supply development, riparian protection, and wildlife habitat enhancement. Producers interested in implementing conservation practices to improve natural resources on their private agricultural land have until Friday, December 15, 2017 to submit applications.

The opportunities to participate in EQIP are diverse. In addition to the general EQIP enrollment, the Program also affords Veterans, socially disadvantaged, beginning, and limited resource farmers and ranchers specific opportunities to improve or enhance natural resources on their lands. There are even specific opportunities for landowners with interests in improving forest and soil health as well as those wanting to enhance sage grouse, southwestern willow flycatcher, and lesser prairie chicken habitat.

Applications are accepted at all Colorado NRCS offices which are located in USDA Service Centers. To find out more information about EQIP or to locate a local NRCS office near you, please visit [www.co.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov) and select the Contact Us or Programs links. You may click here: [USDA SERVICE CENTER](http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov) or [PROGRAMS](http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov).

When visiting with NRCS staff about the EQIP program, landowners are encouraged to inquire about NRCS’ comprehensive conservation plans. The Agency continually strives to put conservation planning at the forefront of its programs and initiatives. Conservation plans provide landowners with a comprehensive inventory and assessment of their resources, as well as an appropriate start to improving the quality of soil, water, air, plants, and wildlife on their land.

Important Dates to Remember and Interest Rate for November

**Important FSA Dates to Remember:**

- **NOW!!** - File form CCC-633 EZ page 1 with FSA before losing beneficial interest to maintain Loan Deficiency Payment (LDP) eligibility. (To request payments, producers need to submit page 2 of the CCC-633EZ)

- **Nov 12** – Last day to remove hay bales from CRP (FSA prior approval required)

- **Nov 15**: 2018 Acreage Reporting Deadline for Apiculture, Perennial Forage, Pasture, Rangeland, Forage (PRF) including native grass, fall wheat (Hard Red Winter), and all other fall-seeded small grains

- **Nov. 20** – 2018 NAP Application Closing Date for Apples, Apricots, Cherries, Grapes, Hops, Nectarines, Peaches, Pears, Plums and Prunes

- **Nov 30** – Last day of 1st grazing period for CRP in FY18

- **Dec. 1** – 2018 NAP Application Closing Date for Alfalfa, Clover, Grass, Honey, Mixed Forage, Mustard and Vetch

- **Dec 4**: Last Day to Return Voted County Committee Election Ballots to local FSA Offices

- **Dec. 15**: Last Day of 2018 MPP-Dairy Signup

- **Jan. 1, 2018**: Newly elected FSA County Committee Members Take Office
• Jan. 2, 2018: 2018 Acreage Reporting Deadline for Honey covered under NAP (or 30 days after placement of colonies.) Please note that this is the Final Acreage Reporting Deadline for 2017 Honey covered under NAP.

• Jan. 30, 2018: Deadline for 2017 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) Application for Payment and Supporting Documentation

• Jan. 30, 2018: Deadline for 2017 Tree Assistance Program (TAP) Application for Payment and Supporting Documentation for Loss of 2017 (or 90 days after disaster event or loss was apparent)

For more information about FSA programs, contact your local FSA office.

Ongoing Notice of Loss Requirements:

• NAP: Submit Notice of Loss within 15 calendar days of the earlier of a natural disaster occurrence, the final planting date if planting is prevented by a natural disaster, the date that damage to the crop or loss of production becomes apparent; the normal harvest date.

• NAP: For hand-harvested crops, producer must notify County Office within 72 hours of the date of damage or loss first became apparent.

• NAP: Application for Payment must be filed no later than 60 calendar days after the coverage period ends for the pay crop.

• ELAP: Submit Notice of Loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent or Nov. 1st after the end of the program year in which the loss occurred.

• Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP): Submit Notice of Loss within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent

November FSA Interest Rate:

• Farm Operating: 2.750%
• Farm Ownership: 3.625%
• Farm Ownership - Joint Financing: 2.500%
• Farm Ownership - Down Payment: 1.500%
• Farm Operating – 2.750%
• Operating Microloan – 5.000%
• Emergency - Actual Loss: 3.75%
• Farm Storage Facility Loan 3 year term: 1.625%
• Farm Storage Facility Loan 5 year term: 1.875%
• Farm Storage Facility Loan 7 year term: 2.125%
• Farm Storage Facility Loan 10 year term: 2.375%
• Farm Storage Facility Loan 12 year term: 2.375%

Commodity Loan: 2.375%

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).