

February 2017



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## Connecticut FSA Newsletter

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### Connecticut Farm Service Agency

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#### State Executive Director:

Doris Ostrowski  
Acting

#### State Committee:

Vincent Malerba, Chair  
Theresa Freund, Member  
Stephen Jarmoc, Member  
Edward Kasheta, Member

### 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](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)

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**Office Staff:**  
Ross Eddy,  
District Director

Randy Kleiner,  
Farm Loan Chief

Doris Ostrowski,  
Administrative Officer

Dawn Pindell,  
Outreach Specialist

## February Loan Interest Rates

Farm Operating - Direct 2.875%

Farm Ownership: Direct 4.00%

Farm Ownership: Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer 1.50%

Farm Storage Facility Loan (7 years) 2.250%

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**Find your local office at:**  
**[www.fsa.usda.gov/ct](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ct)**  
Click on County Offices  
on right side column.

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## FSAfarm+, FSA's Customer Self-Service Portal

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) has launched a new tool to provide farmers with remote access to their personal farm information using their home computers. Farmers can view, print or export their personal farm data from the comfort of their home or farm office.

The program, known as **FSAfarm+**, provides you with secure access to view your personal FSA data, such as base and yields, Conservation Reserve Program data, other conservation program acreage, Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation status information, field boundaries, farm imagery, name and address details, contact information and membership interest and shares in the operation. This data will be available in real time, at no cost to the producer and allow operators and owners to export and print farm records, including maps. Producers also can electronically share their data with a crop insurance agent from their own personal computer.

Farm operators and owners first will need "Level 2 eAuthentication" to access the webportal. This level of security ensures that personal information is protected for each user. Level 2 access can be obtained by going to [www.eauth.usda.gov](http://www.eauth.usda.gov), completing the required information and then visiting your local FSA office to finalize access.

For more information on **FSAfarm+**, the customer self-service portal, contact your local FSA office.

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## Breaking New Ground

Agricultural producers are reminded to consult with FSA and NRCS before breaking out new ground for production purposes as doing so without prior authorization may put a producer's federal farm program benefits in jeopardy. This is especially true for land that must meet Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions.

Producers with HEL determined soils are required to apply tillage, crop residue and rotational requirements as specified in their conservation plan.

Producers should notify FSA as a first point of contact prior to conducting land clearing or drainage type projects to ensure the proposed actions meet compliance criteria such as clearing any trees to create new cropland, then these areas will need to be reviewed to ensure such work will not risk your eligibility for benefits.

Landowners and operators complete form AD-1026 - Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification to identify the proposed action and allow FSA to determine whether a referral to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for further review is necessary.

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## **Farm Storage Facility Loans**

FSA's Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program provides low-interest financing to producers to build or upgrade storage facilities and to purchase portable (new or used) structures, equipment and storage and handling trucks.

The low-interest funds can be used to build or upgrade permanent facilities to store commodities. Eligible commodities include corn, grain sorghum, soybeans, oats, wheat, barley, minor oilseeds harvested as whole grain, hay, honey, renewable biomass, fruits, and vegetables for cold storage facilities, floriculture, hops, maple sap, rye, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, meat and poultry (unprocessed), eggs, and aquaculture (excluding systems that maintain live animals through uptake and discharge of water). Qualified facilities include grain bins, hay barns and cold storage facilities for eligible commodities.

Loans up to \$50,000 can be secured by a promissory note/security agreement and some loans between \$50,000 and \$100,000 will no longer require additional security.

Producers do not need to demonstrate lack of commercial credit availability to apply. The loans are designed to assist a diverse range of farming operations, including small and mid-sized businesses, new farmers, operations supplying local food and farmers markets, non-traditional farm products, and underserved producers.

To learn more about the FSA Farm Storage Facility Loan; [www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport) or visit your FSA county office.

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## **March 15th Deadline for NAP Coverage**

The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) closing deadline for most annual fruits and vegetables is March 15. Eligible producers must apply for coverage and pay the applicable service fees by the application closing date. Acreage reports are also due annually. Coverage for specific crops may be checked online at [www.fsa.usda.gov/nap](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/nap).

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## **USDA's Farm Service Agency Expands Bridges to Opportunity Nationwide**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced the expansion of a unique service for farmers. FSA's Bridges to Opportunity program provides a one-stop-shop that connects producers with resources, programs and educational services offered across the department, as well as from other USDA partner organizations. Bridges to Opportunity, which currently provides enhanced customer support to more than 150,000 customers in 20 states,

will expand to serve customers across the country before the end of the month using fiscal year 2016 funds.

FSA's presence in over 2,100 county offices, in nearly every rural county, puts the agency in a unique position to partner with non-governmental organizations to reach thousands of agricultural producers who can benefit from their programs and services. Bridges to Opportunity allows FSA employees to search and obtain a list of all local, state, regional and national organizations that may be able assist local producers with their specific need. For example, FSA's Houston County office in Texas partnered with many agricultural organizations to serve producers affected by severe drought. When drought-stricken agricultural producers came to the county office looking for assistance, FSA employees were able to provide traditional services, such as the Livestock Forage Program and the Emergency loan program administered by FSA, as well as connect local farmers with local, regional, and national organizations that provide drought assistance and education.

Bridges to Opportunity was developed by FSA to provide producers with a more comprehensive customer service experience by connecting them with other USDA agencies and nonfederal partners. Through Bridges to Opportunity, FSA county office employees have the tools to connect farmers, ranchers and anyone interested in agriculture with customized expertise on topics ranging including organic production, beginning farmer resources, integrated pest management, disaster assistance, conservation practices, agricultural educational courses, loans, grants and other financial assistance that can start, grow or benefit farming and ranching operations.

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## **USDA Microloans Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property**

*Producers, Including Beginning and Underserved Farmers, Have a New Option to Gain Access to Land*

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is offering farm ownership microloans, creating a new financing avenue for farmers to buy and improve property. These microloans are especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming, and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations.

The microloan program has been hugely successful, providing more than 16,800 low-interest loans, totaling over \$373 million to producers across the country. Microloans have helped farmers with operating costs, such as feed, fertilizer, tools, fencing, equipment, and living expenses since 2013. Seventy percent of loans have gone to new farmers.

Now, microloans will be available to also help with farm land and building purchases, and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate loans to help farmers strengthen their operations. Microloans provide up to \$50,000 to qualified producers, and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

To learn more about the FSA microloan program visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans), or contact your local FSA office.

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## **Agriculture Meetings & Program Deadlines**

**February 14th** - Vegetable Crop Pests You Need to Know, 9 to 13:30 at Windham County Extension Center, Brooklyn. [Sharon.narotsky@uconn.edu](mailto:Sharon.narotsky@uconn.edu)

**February 15th** - Solid Ground Farmer Training: Fruit Production and Small Scale Farming, 4 to 7 pm, Common Ground High School, New Haven: <http://newfarms.extension.uconn.edu/solidground/>

**February 16th** - Small Fruit Pest Workshop, 8:30 to 12:30, Litchfield County Extension Center, Torrington: [www.plant.lab.UConn.edu/workshops](http://www.plant.lab.UConn.edu/workshops)

**February 20th** - FSA Offices are closed for President's Day Holiday

**February 21st** - Annual Meeting for Growing Wrapper Tobacco in the Connecticut River Valley, 9 to 1 at Scout Hall, East Windsor, Snow date is Feb. 22nd if East Windsor schools are closed on the 21st.

**February 23rd** - Small Fruit Pest Workshop, 8:30 to 12:30, Middlesex County Extension Center, Haddam; [www.plant.lab.UConn.edu/workshops](http://www.plant.lab.UConn.edu/workshops)

**March 4th** - One on One Session, 9 to 3, Farm Bureau Office, Wethersfield; CED Martha Dorsey will be meeting with farmers: <http://www.ctfarmrisk.uconn.edu/one-on-one.php>

**March 4th** Urban Farming Conference 8 to 5:30, Boston, MA, <https://urbanfarminginstitute.org/2nd-annual-massachusetts-farming-conference/>

**March 8 to 9th** 2017 Harvest New England Agricultural Marketing Conference and Trade Show; [www.harvestnewengland.org/events](http://www.harvestnewengland.org/events) , Sturbridge, MA

**March 9th** - Small Fruit Pest Workshop, 8:30 to 12:30, Windham County Extension Center, Brooklyn; [www.plant.lab.UConn.edu/workshops](http://www.plant.lab.UConn.edu/workshops)

**March 11 to 12** CT NOFA 35th Annual Winter Conference, Western CT University, Danbury, CT; <http://www.ctnofa.org/winterconference/workshops.html>

**March 13th** - One on One Session, 9 to 3, Middlesex County Extension Center, Haddam, ACED Teresa Peavey will be meeting with farmers: <http://www.ctfarmrisk.uconn.edu/one-on-one.php>

**March 15th** - Deadline to enroll in Noninsured Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) for spring planted annual crops. Visit your county FSA office.

**March 15th** - Agriculture Day at the Capitol, 10 to 1; [www.ctaginfocouncil.org](http://www.ctaginfocouncil.org)

**March 18th to 19th** - Hebron Maple Festival; <http://www.hebronmaplefest.com/>

**March 30th** - One on One Session, 9 to 3, New London County Extension Center, Norwich , CED Sarah Woodward will be meeting with farmers; <http://www.ctfarmrisk.uconn.edu/one-on-one.php>

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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).

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