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Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

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Florida FSA Newsletter

Florida Farm Service Agency

4440 NW 25th Place, St 1
Gainesville, FL 32606

Phone: 352-379-4500

<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/fl>

State Committee:

Michelle Williamson (Chair)
Mike Adams
Jimmy LeFils
Mack Glass
Mark Soddors

State Executive Director:

Sherry McCorkle

Division Chiefs:

Report: Farmers Prevented from Planting Crops on More than 19 Million Acres

Agricultural producers reported they were not able to plant crops on more than 19.4 million acres in 2019, according to a [new report](#) released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). This marks the most prevented plant acres reported since USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) began releasing the report in 2007 and 17.49 million acres more than reported at this time last year.

Of those prevented plant acres, more than 73 percent were in 12 Midwestern states, where heavy rainfall and flooding this year has prevented many producers from planting mostly corn, soybeans and wheat.

Cover Crops

USDA supported planting of cover crops on fields where farmers were not able to plant because of their benefits in preventing soil erosion, protecting water quality and boosting soil health. The report showed where producers planted 2.71 million acres of cover

Administrative Officer
Mark Cotrell

crops so far in 2019, compared with 2.14 million acres at this time in 2018 and 1.88 million at this time in 2017.

Farm Program
Tom Hockert

To help make cover crops a more viable option, USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) adjusted the haying and grazing date of cover crops, and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service held signups in select states that offered producers assistance in planting cover crops. Meanwhile, USDA added other flexibilities to help impacted producers, including adjusting the deadline to file acreage reports in select states.

Acting Farm Loans
Christy Marshall

Please contact your local FSA Office for questions specific to your operation or county.

About the Report

This data report aggregates information from crop acreage reports as of August 1, 2019, which producers file with FSA to maintain program eligibility and to calculate losses for various disaster assistance programs. The crop acreage data report outlines the number of acres planted, prevented from planting, and failed by crop, county and state. To find more information, view the [Aug. 12 report](#).

Because some producers have not completed their filing and data are still being processed, FSA will make available subsequent data reports in September, October, November, December and January. You can find reports from 2007 to the present on FSA's [Crop Acreage Data webpage](#).

To receive FSA program benefits, producers are required to submit crop acreage reports annually regarding all cropland uses on their farm. This report includes data for producers who had already filed for all deadlines in 2019, including the mid-July deadlines, which are for spring-seeded crops in many locations.

Other Prevented Planting Indicators

In addition to acreage reports filed with FSA, producers with crop insurance coverage for prevented planting file claims with their insurance providers. These claims are provided to RMA and may differ from the prevented planted acres reported to FSA. More information on prevented plant coverage is available on the [RMA website](#).

Official USDA estimates of total acres planted, harvested and to be harvested, yield, and production are available from USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service at [nass.usda.gov](#).

USDA Opens Signup for Market Facilitation Program

Enrollment Now Open through Dec. 6

Signup opens today for the Market Facilitation Program (MFP), a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) program to assist farmers who continue to suffer from damages because of unjustified trade retaliation from foreign nations. Through MFP, USDA will provide up to \$14.5 billion in direct payments to impacted producers, part of a broader trade relief package announced in late July. The sign-up period runs through Dec. 6.

MFP payments will be made to producers of certain non-specialty and specialty crops as well as dairy and hog producers.

Non-Specialty Crops

MFP payments will be made to producers of alfalfa hay, barley, canola, corn, crambe, dried beans, dry peas, extra-long staple cotton, flaxseed, lentils, long grain and medium grain rice, millet, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, rapeseed, rye, safflower, sesame seed, small and large chickpeas, sorghum, soybeans, sunflower seed, temperate japonica rice, triticale, upland cotton, and wheat.

MFP assistance for 2019 crops is based on a single county payment rate multiplied by a farm's total plantings to the MFP-eligible crops in aggregate in 2019. Those per acre payments are not dependent on which of those crops are planted in 2019. A producer's total payment-eligible plantings cannot exceed total 2018 plantings. [View payment rates by county.](#)

Dairy and Hogs

Dairy producers who were in business as of June 1, 2019, will receive a per hundredweight payment on production history, and hog producers will receive a payment based on the number of live hogs owned on a day selected by the producer between April 1 and May 15, 2019.

Specialty Crops

MFP payments will also be made to producers of almonds, cranberries, cultivated ginseng, fresh grapes, fresh sweet cherries, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, pecans, pistachios, and walnuts. Each specialty crop will receive a payment based on 2019 acres of fruit or nut bearing plants, or in the case of ginseng, based on harvested acres in 2019.

More Information

Payments will be made in up to three tranches, with the second and third tranches evaluated as market conditions and trade opportunities dictate. If conditions warrant, the second and third tranches will be made in November and early January.

MFP payments are limited to a combined \$250,000 for non-specialty crops per person or legal entity. MFP payments are also limited to a combined \$250,000 for dairy and hog producers and a combined \$250,000 for specialty crop producers. However, no applicant can receive more than \$500,000. Eligible applicants must also have an average adjusted gross income (AGI) for tax years 2015, 2016, and 2017 of less than \$900,000, or 75 percent of the person's or legal entity's average AGI for those tax years must have been derived from farming and ranching. Applicants must also comply with the provisions of the Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation regulations.

More information can be found on farmers.gov/mfp, including payment information and a program application.

New Farmers.gov Feature Helps Producers Find Farm Loans that Fit Their Operation

A new online tool can help farmers and ranchers find information on U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) farm loans that may best fit their operations. USDA has launched the new *Farm Loan Discovery Tool* as the newest feature on farmers.gov, the Department's self-service website for farmers.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers a variety of loan options to help farmers finance their operations. From buying land to financing the purchase of equipment, FSA loans can help. Compared to this time last year, FSA has seen an 18 percent increase in the amount it has

obligated for direct farm ownership loans, and through the 2018 Farm Bill, has [increased the limits](#) for several loan products.

USDA conducted field research in eight states, gathering input from farmers and FSA farm loan staff to better understand their needs and challenges.

How the Tool Works

Farmers who are looking for financing options to operate a farm or buy land can answer a few simple questions about what they are looking to fund and how much money they need to borrow. After submitting their answers, farmers will be provided information on farm loans that best fit their specific needs. The loan application and additional resources also will be provided.

Farmers can download application quick guides that outline what to expect from preparing an application to receiving a loan decision. There are four guides that cover loans to individuals, entities, and youth, as well as information on microloans. The guides include general eligibility requirements and a list of required forms and documentation for each type of loan. These guides can help farmers prepare before their first USDA service center visit with a loan officer.

Farmers can access the *Farm Loan Discovery Tool* by visiting farmers.gov/fund and clicking the “Start” button. Follow the prompts and answer five simple questions to receive loan information that is applicable to your agricultural operation. The tool is built to run on any modern browser like Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or the Safari browser, and is fully functional on mobile devices. It does not work in Internet Explorer.

About Farmers.gov

In 2018, USDA unveiled farmers.gov, a dynamic, mobile-friendly public website combined with an authenticated portal where farmers will be able to apply for programs, process transactions, and manage accounts.

The *Farm Loan Discovery Tool* is one of many resources on farmers.gov to help connect farmers to information that can help their operations. Earlier this year, USDA launched the *My Financial Information* feature, which enables farmers to view their loan information, history, payments, and alerts by logging into the website.

USDA is building farmers.gov for farmers, by farmers. In addition to the interactive farm loan features, the site also offers a Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool. Farmers can visit farmers.gov/recover/disaster-assistance-tool#step-1 to find disaster assistance programs that can help their operation recover from natural disasters.

With feedback from customers and field employees who serve those customers, farmers.gov delivers farmer-focused features through an agile, iterative process to deliver the greatest immediate value to America’s agricultural producers – helping farmers and ranchers do right, and feed everyone.

For more information or to locate your USDA Service Center, visit farmers.gov.

USDA Offers Producers Options to Re-enroll or Extend Expiring CRP Contracts

Farmers and ranchers with expiring [Conservation Reserve Program](#) (CRP) contracts may now re-enroll in certain CRP continuous signup practices or, if eligible, select a one-year contract extension. USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) is also accepting offers from landowners who want to enroll for the first time in one of the country’s largest conservation programs. FSA’s 52nd signup for CRP runs from June 3 to August 23.

This year's CRP continuous signup includes practices such as grass waterways, filter strips, riparian buffers, wetland restoration and others. [View a full list of practices approved for this signup](#). Continuous signup contracts last for 10 to 15 years. Soil rental rates are set at 90 percent of 2018 rates. Incentive payments are not offered for these practices.

Producers interested in applying for CRP continuous practices, including those under existing CREP agreements, or who want to extend their contract, should contact their USDA service center by August 23.

To locate your local FSA office, visit www.farmers.gov. More information on CRP can be found at www.fsa.usda.gov/crp.

USDA Now Making Payments for New Dairy Margin Coverage Program

Income-over-feed margin for May triggers fifth payment for 2019

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency (FSA) opened enrollment for the [Dairy Margin Coverage](#) (DMC) program on June 17 and has started issuing payments to producers who purchased coverage. Producers can enroll through Sept. 20, 2019.

Authorized by the 2018 Farm Bill, DMC replaces the Margin Protection Program for Dairy (MPP-Dairy). The program offers 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. To date, nearly 10,000 operations have signed up for the new program, and FSA has begun paying approximately \$100 million to producers for January through May.

May Margin Payment

DMC provides coverage retroactive to January 1, 2019, with applicable payments following soon after enrollment.

The May 2019 income over feed cost margin was \$9.00 per hundredweight (cwt.), triggering the fifth payment for eligible dairy producers who purchase the \$9.50 level of coverage under DMC. Payments for January, February, March and April also were triggered.

With the 50 percent hay blend, FSA's revised April 2019 income over feed cost margin is \$8.82 per cwt. The revised margins for January, February and March are, respectively, \$7.71, \$7.91 and \$8.66.

Coverage Levels and MPP Reimbursements

Dairy producers can choose coverage levels from \$4 up to \$9.50 at the time of signup. More than 98 percent of the producers currently enrolled have elected \$9.50 coverage on up to 95 percent of their production history.

More Information

On December 20, 2018, President Trump signed into law the 2018 Farm Bill, which provides support, certainty and stability to our nation's farmers, ranchers and land stewards by enhancing farm support programs, improving crop insurance, maintaining disaster programs and promoting and supporting voluntary conservation. FSA is committed to implementing these changes as quickly and effectively as possible, and today's updates are part of meeting that goal.

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

Environmental Review Required Before Project Implementation

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires Federal agencies to consider all potential environmental impacts for federally-funded projects before the project is approved.

For all Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs, an environmental review must be completed before actions are approved, such as site preparation or ground disturbance. These programs include, **but are not limited to**, the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program and farm loans. If project implementation begins before FSA has completed an environmental review, this will result in a denial of the request. There are exceptions regarding the Stafford Act and emergencies. It is important to wait until you receive written approval of your project proposal before starting any actions, including, but not limited to, vegetation clearing, site preparation or ground disturbance.

Remember to contact your local FSA office early in your planning process to determine what level of environmental review is required for your program application so that it can be completed timely.

Applications cannot be approved contingent upon the completion of an environmental review. FSA must have copies of all permits and plans before an application can be approved.

Farm Reconstitutions

When changes in farm ownership or operation take place, a farm *reconstitution* is necessary. The reconstitution — or recon — is the process of combining or dividing farms or tracts of land based on the farming operation.

To be effective for the current Fiscal Year (FY), farm combinations and farm divisions must be requested by **August 1 of the FY** for farms subject to the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program. A reconstitution is considered to be requested when all:

- of the required signatures are on FSA-155
- other applicable documentation, such as proof of ownership, is submitted.

Total Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and non-ARC/PLC farms may be reconstituted at any time.

The following are the different methods used when doing a farm recon:

Estate Method — the division of bases, allotments and quotas for a parent farm among heirs in settling an estate;

Designation of Landowner Method — may be used when (1) part of a farm is sold or ownership is transferred; (2) an entire farm is sold to two or more persons; (3) farm ownership is transferred to two or more persons; (4) part of a tract is sold or ownership is transferred; (5) a tract is sold to two or more persons; or (6) tract ownership is transferred to two or more persons. In order to use this method the land sold must have been owned for at least three years, or a waiver granted, and the buyer and seller must sign a Memorandum of Understanding;

DCP Cropland Method — the division of bases in the same proportion that the DCP cropland for each resulting tract relates to the DCP cropland on the parent tract;

Default Method — the division of bases for a parent farm with each tract maintaining the bases attributed to the tract level when the reconstitution is initiated in the system.

Weather the Storm: FEMA Mobile App Provides Weather Alerts and Safety Tips

USDA offers programs to help producers recover from disasters; FEMA can help you prepare ahead of time.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recently launched a free mobile app that will instruct the public on what to do before, during and after emergencies. The app is available for download for Apple, Android and Blackberry mobile devices.

Download the app to:

- Receive alerts from the National Weather Service for up to five locations
- Get safety reminders, read tips to survive natural disasters and customize your emergency checklist
- Locate open shelters and where to talk to FEMA in person (or on the phone)
- Upload and share your disaster photos to help first responders.

For more information about the FEMA app, visit fema.gov/mobile-app. To download the FEMA app from the Apple Store visit <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/fema/id474807486?mt=8>. To download the FEMA app on Google Play for Android visit: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=gov.fema.mobile.android&hl=en>

USDA Packages Disaster Protection with Loans to Benefit Specialty Crop and Diversified Producers

Free basic coverage available for new and underserved loan applicants

Producers who apply for FSA farm loans will be offered the opportunity to enroll in the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP). NAP is available to producers who grow noninsurable crops, and is especially important to fruit and vegetable producers and other specialty crop growers.

New, underserved and limited income specialty growers who apply for farm loans could qualify for basic loss coverage at no cost.

The basic disaster coverage protects at 55 percent of the market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of production. Covered crops include “specialty” crops, for instance, vegetables, fruits, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, hay, forage, grazing and energy crops. FSA allows beginning, underserved or limited income producers to obtain NAP coverage up to 90 days after the normal application closing date when they also apply for FSA credit.

Producers also may work with FSA to protect value-added production, such as organic or direct market crops, at their fair market value in those markets. Targeted underserved groups eligible for free or discounted coverage are American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, and women.

FSA offers a variety of loan products, including farm ownership loans, operating loans and microloans that have a streamlined application process.

Growers need not apply for an FSA loan, nor be a beginning, limited resource, or underserved farmer, to be eligible for Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program assistance. To learn more, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/nap or www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans, or contact your local FSA office at <https://offices.usda.gov>.

Dates to Remember

September 2 - Federal Holiday. Offices Closed

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).