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Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Indiana Farm Service Agency Program Updates

Indiana Farm Service Agency

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Full-Time Permanent Farm Loan Officer Vacancies

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) is seeking to fill two full-time permanent Farm Loan Officer positions for the offices in Greensburg and New Castle, Indiana. Farm Loan Officers are required to successfully complete all of the requirements of the Farm Loan Training Program. This position works in a developmental capacity receiving on-the-job and classroom training in the administration of farm loan programs. The candidate may be reassigned to another training office during their training program. In addition, upon completion of the training program, the candidate may be reassigned, at any time, to a different duty station if workload activity changes or vacancies occur. Benefits include health insurance, life insurance, leave and a retirement program. This announcement is open from June 27 to July 3, 2018. Apply by visiting these links; for a GS-09, <https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/503540200>; and for a GS-05/07, <https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/503540300>.

USDA Enrollment Period for Safety Net Coverage in 2018

Farmers 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.

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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>.

2018 Acreage Reporting Dates

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

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

The following acreage reporting dates are applicable for Indiana:

January 2 - Honey
January 15 - Apples
June 15 - Cucumbers (Planted 5/1-5/31 in Knox County)
July 15 - Cucumbers (Planted 5/10-6/15 in all counties), all other crops
August 15 - Cucumbers (Planted 6/16-8/5 in Fulton, LaPorte, Porter, and St. Joseph Counties)
September 15 - Cucumbers (Planted 6/1-8/15 in Knox County)
September 30 - Value Loss and Controlled Environment Crop (for the coming program year)
November 15 - Perennial Grazing and Forage Crops (alfalfa, grass, mixed forages, clover, etc.)
December 15 - Fall Mint, Fall-Seeded Small Grains

The following exceptions apply to the above acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the above 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 above acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar 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.
- Cucumbers and crops for NAP coverage may have dates not included on the chart above. Visit your local county office for details.

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

USDA Resumes Continuous Conservation Reserve Program Enrollment

One-Year Extension Available to Holders of Many Expiring Contracts through Continuous Signup

As part of a 33-year effort to protect sensitive lands and improve water quality and wildlife habitat on private lands, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has resumed accepting applications for the voluntary [Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\)](#). Eligible farmers and private landowners can sign up at their local [Farm Service Agency \(FSA\)](#) office between June 4 and Aug. 17, 2018.

FSA stopped accepting applications last fall for the CRP continuous signup (excluding applications for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and CRP grasslands). This pause allowed USDA to review available acres and avoid exceeding the 24 million-acre CRP cap set by the 2014 Farm Bill. New limited practice availability and short sign up period helps ensure that landowners with the most sensitive acreage will enroll in the program and avoid unintended competition with new and beginning farmers seeking leases. CRP enrollment currently is about 22.7 million acres.

2018 Signup for CRP

For this year's signup, limited priority practices are available for continuous enrollment. They include grassed waterways, filter strips, riparian buffers, wetland restoration and others. [View a full list of practices.](#)

FSA will use updated soil rental rates to make annual rental payments, reflecting current values. It will not offer incentive payments as part of the new signup.

USDA will not open a general signup this year, however, a one-year extension will be offered to existing CRP participants with expiring CRP contracts of 14 years or less. Producers eligible for an extension will receive a letter with more information.

CRP Grasslands

Additionally, FSA established new [ranking criteria](#) for [CRP Grasslands](#). To guarantee all CRP grasslands offers are treated equally, applicants who previously applied will be asked to reapply using the new ranking criteria. Producers with pending applications will receive a letter providing the options.

About CRP

In return for enrolling land in CRP, USDA, through FSA on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), provides participants with annual rental payments and cost-share assistance. Landowners enter into contracts that last between 10 and 15 years. CRP pays producers who remove sensitive lands from production and plant certain grasses, shrubs and trees that improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and increase wildlife habitat.

The new changes to CRP do not impact the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, a related program offered by CCC and state partners.

Producers wanting to apply for the CRP continuous signup or CRP grasslands should contact their [USDA service center](#). More information on CRP can be found at www.fsa.usda.gov/crp.

CRP Participants Must Maintain Approved Cover on Acreages Enrolled in CRP and the Farm Programs

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) participants are responsible for ensuring adequate, approved vegetative and practice cover is maintained to control erosion throughout the life of the contract after the practice has been established. Participants must also control undesirable vegetation, weeds (including noxious weeds), insects and rodents that may pose a threat to existing cover or adversely impact other landowners in the area.

All CRP maintenance activities, such as mowing, burning, disking and spraying, must be conducted outside the primary nesting or brood rearing season for wildlife, which for Indiana is April 1 through August 1 each year for contracts which started in 2008. If your contract was approved prior to 2008, then the primary nesting season is March 1 through July 15. However, spot treatment of the acreage may be allowed during the primary nesting or brood rearing season if, left untreated, the weeds, insects or undesirable species would adversely impact the approved cover. In this instance, spot treatment is limited to the affected areas in the field and requires County Committee approval prior to beginning the spot treatment. The County Committee will consult with NRCS to determine if such activities are needed to maintain the approved cover.

Annual mowing of CRP for generic weed control, or for cosmetic purposes, is prohibited at all times.

Nominations Open for the 2018 County Committee Elections

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) encourages all farmers and FSA program participants to take part in the County Committee election nomination process.

FSA's county committees are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA and allow grassroots input and local administration of federal farm programs.

Committees are comprised of locally elected agricultural producers responsible for the fair and equitable administration of FSA farm programs in their counties. Committee members are accountable to the Secretary of Agriculture. If elected, members become part of a local decision making and farm program delivery process.

A county committee is composed of three to 11 elected members from local administrative areas (LAA). Each member serves a three-year term. One-third of the seats on these committees are open for election each year. Contact your local FSA office to find out if your LAA is up for an election. County committees may have an appointed advisor to further represent the local interests of underserved farmers. Underserved producers are beginning, women and other minority farmers and land owners and/or operators who have limited resources. Other minority groups including Native American and Alaska Natives; persons under the poverty level, and persons that have disabilities are also considered underserved.

All nomination forms for the 2018 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA service center by Aug. 1, 2018. For more information on FSA county committee elections and appointments, refer to the FSA fact sheet: Eligibility to Vote and Hold Office as a COC Member available online at: www.fsa.usda.gov/elections.

FSA Offers Safety Net Programs for Honeybee Producers

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers two programs that have specific safety net benefits for producers of honeybees and honey. The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) and the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) assist producers when disasters impact honey production or damage or destroy colonies, hives or honeybee feed.

NAP is designed to reduce financial losses when natural disasters result in lower yields or crop losses, including honey. NAP coverage is equivalent to catastrophic insurance, meaning it covers up to 50 percent of a producer's normal yield (must have at least a 50 percent loss) at 55 percent of the average market price. The NAP service fee is the lesser of \$250 per crop or \$750 per producer per administrative county, not to exceed a total of \$1,875 for a producer with farming interests in multiple counties. Eligible causes of loss include drought, freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive wind, hurricanes, earthquake, flood, and conditions related to damaging weather such as excessive heat, plant disease, volcanic smog or insect infestation.

Producers must apply for NAP coverage by Dec. 1 prior to the year for which they are seeking coverage.

ELAP covers colony losses, hive losses and the loss of purchased feed intended for honeybees. For colony losses, producers must have losses in excess of normal mortality (normal mortality is 22 percent) as a direct result of an eligible adverse weather event or loss condition. For hive losses, the hive must have been damaged or destroyed as a result of an eligible adverse weather event or loss condition. Eligible adverse weather or loss conditions include Colony Collapse Disorder (for colony losses only), earthquake, eligible winter storm (colony loss only), excessive wind, flood, hurricane, lightning, tornado, volcanic eruption and wildfire. For purchased feed, the program covers feed purchased above normal quantities to sustain bees during an eligible adverse weather event or loss condition. Under ELAP the producer must provide documentation that best management practices are being followed.

Both the NAP and ELAP programs require producers to report the number of colonies they have in production to FSA by Jan. 2, 2019. Honeybee producers must notify FSA within 30 calendar days of changes in the total number of colonies or when honeybees are moved to another county.

For ELAP, producers must notify FSA within 30 calendar days of when a loss occurs or from when the loss is apparent. Producers with NAP coverage must file a Notice of Loss within 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent.

To learn more about programs for honey and honeybee producers, contact your local FSA office.

Indiana Counties Eligible for Emergency Loans Following Presidential Disaster Declaration

The following Indiana counties were declared a natural disaster area as contiguous counties to primary natural disaster areas in Ohio, due to severe storms, flooding and landslides that occurred February 14, 2018 through February 25, 2018. Under this designation, producers with operations in any primary or contiguous county are eligible to apply for low interest emergency loans. Emergency loan applications will be received through December 17, 2018.

Dearborn, Franklin

The following Indiana primary and contiguous counties were declared a natural disaster area due to severe storms and flooding that occurred February 14, 2018 through March 4, 2018. Under this designation, producers with operations in any primary or contiguous county are eligible to apply for low interest emergency loans. Emergency loan applications will be received through February 5, 2019.

Benton, Carroll, Cass, Clark, Clinton, Crawford, Dearborn, Dubois, Elkhart, Floyd, Fountain, Franklin, Fulton, Gibson, Grant, Harrison, Howard, Huntington, Jasper, Jefferson, Jennings, Knox, Kosciusko, LaGrange, Lake, LaPorte, Marshall, Miami, Newton, Noble, Ohio, Orange, Parke, Perry, Pike, Porter, Posey, Pulaski, Ripley, St. Joseph, Scott, Spencer, Starke, Switzerland, Tippecanoe, Vanderburgh, Vermillion, Vigo, Wabash, Warren, Warrick, Washington, White, Whitley

The following Indiana counties were declared a natural disaster area as contiguous counties to primary natural disaster areas in Kentucky, due to severe storms, tornadoes, flooding, landslides and mudslides that occurred February 21, 2018 through March 21, 2018. Under this designation, producers with operations in any primary or contiguous county are eligible to apply for low interest emergency loans. Emergency loan applications will be received through December 26, 2018.

Clark, Floyd, Harrison, Jefferson, Perry, Posey, Spencer, Switzerland, Vanderburgh, Warrick

Emergency loans help producers recover from production and physical losses due to drought, flooding and other natural disasters or quarantine.

Producers have eight months from the date of the declaration to apply for emergency loan assistance. FSA will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability. Producers can borrow up to 100 percent of actual production or physical losses, to a maximum amount of \$500,000.

For more information about emergency loans, please contact your local FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

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 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 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 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 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>.

Maintaining Good Credit History

Farm Service Agency (FSA) Farm Loan programs require that applicants have a satisfactory credit history. A credit report is requested for all FSA direct farm loan applicants. These reports are reviewed to verify outstanding debts, if bills are paid timely and to determine the impact on cash flow.

Information found on a customer's credit report is strictly confidential and is used only as an aid in conducting FSA business.

Our farm loan staff will discuss options with you if you have an unfavorable credit report and will provide you with a copy of your report. If you dispute the accuracy of the information on the credit report, it is up to you to contact the issuing credit report company to resolve any errors or inaccuracies.

There are multiple ways to remedy an unfavorable credit score.

- Make sure to pay bills on time. Setting up automatic payments or automated reminders can be an effective way to remember payment due dates.
- Pay down existing debt.
- Keep your credit card balances low.
- Avoid suddenly opening or closing existing credit accounts. FSA's farm loan staff will guide you through the process, which may require you to reapply for a loan after improving or correcting your credit report.

For more information on FSA farm loan programs, visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

USDA Partners with Texas A&M to Help Veterans Seeking Agriculture Loans and Careers

USDA announced a partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Texas A&M's AgriLife Extension Service to help military veterans obtain loans and pursue careers as farmers and ranchers. Secretary Perdue joined local dignitaries, members of the Armed Forces, veterans, and community leaders at the Dallas Farmers Market to unveil the new pilot program.

USDA's [Farm Service Agency](#) (FSA) is collaborating with AgriLife Extension Service on the pilot, which is part of the Texas A&M Battleground to Breaking Ground project. The program makes it easier for veterans to meet federal requirements to get FSA direct [farm ownership](#) loans, which can help provide access to land and capital.

The pilot program, which will include 15 to 18 veterans, will roll out in three phases: an introductory workshop, a business planning curriculum, and a production curriculum over a period of 12 to 18 months.

Typically, loan applicants must participate in the business operations of a farm for at least three years during a 10-year period. However, as part of this pilot program, participants can combine the certificate they receive with their military leadership or management experience to satisfy this requirement. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, approximately 45 percent of armed service members are from rural America.

Pilot program applications will be accepted from interested veterans between June 15 and July 20, 2018, until 11 p.m. central standard time, [apply here](#). For more information about USDA programs, visit newfarmers.usda.gov/veterans or <https://www.farmers.gov>.

To learn about other ways USDA is supporting veterans, visit <https://www.usda.gov/our-agency/initiatives/veterans>, and watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAeLqXHUU3w>.

Still Time to be Counted in the 2017 Census of Agriculture

NASS to follow-up with producers who have not yet responded

Indiana farmers still have time to be counted in the 2017 Census of Agriculture, according to Greg Matli, State Statistician of the USDA, NASS, Indiana Field Office. Although the first deadline has passed, NASS will continue to accept Census information through the spring to get a complete and accurate picture of American agriculture that represents all farmers.

"We thank everyone who has completed their Census to date and ask those that have not yet returned their Census to please take the time to do it," said Matli. "A lot is at stake if producers are not represented in this data. Census data have and will continue to influence important decisions for American agriculture. The data will affect every operation and every farming community at some point, whether it be through farm policy, disaster relief, insurance or loan programs, infrastructure improvements, or agribusiness setup. There is accuracy and strength in numbers, which is why NASS is committed to giving producers every opportunity to respond."

Federal law mandates that everyone who received the 2017 Census of Agriculture questionnaire complete it and return it even if not currently farming. NASS will continue to follow-up with producers through the spring with mailings, phone calls, and personal visits. To avoid these additional contacts, farmers are encouraged to complete their Census either online at www.agcounts.usda.gov or by mail as soon as possible. Responding online saves time by skipping sections that do not apply and automatically calculating totals. The online questionnaire is accessible on desktops, laptops, and mobile devices.

For more information about the 2017 Census of Agriculture, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov. For questions or assistance filling out the Census, call toll-free (888) 424-7828.

Dates to Remember

Continuing through August 1, 2018: Enrollment for 2018 Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) Programs

Continuing through August 1, 2018: Nominations open for the 2018 County Committee (COC) Election

July 4: Offices closed in observance of Independence Day

July 5: Final date to submit a prevented planting claim for soybeans

July 15: Reporting date for all other crops (including cucumbers planted 5/10-6/15) in all other counties in Indiana

August 1: Deadline to enroll in 2018 Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) Programs

August 1: Deadline to request farm reconstitutions and transfers for 2018

August 1: Deadline to file COC election nomination forms - postmarked or delivered to the local FSA office

August 15: Reporting date for cucumbers (planted 6/16-8/5 in Fulton, LaPorte, Porter and St. Joseph Counties)

August 17: Deadline to apply for voluntary Conservation Reserve Program

September 1: 2018 MPP-Dairy premiums due

September 1: NAP application closing date for value loss crops for the following year (flowers for fresh cut, onion sets, turfgrass sod, Christmas trees, aquaculture, ginseng, mushrooms, etc.)

September 3: Offices closed in observance of Labor Day

September 15: Reporting date for cucumbers (planted 6/1-8/15 in Knox County)

September 30: Reporting date for value loss and controlled environment crop (for the coming program year)

September 30: Deadline to report changes in interest on ARC or PLC contracts

September 30: NAP application closing date for garlic, wheat, barley, rye and mint for the following year's crop

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