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**Indiana FSA Updates**

Greetings from Indiana FSA,

Although the acreage reporting deadline has passed, Indiana FSA offices continue to be busy. New programs have been announced and other deadlines are approaching.

New programs announced include:

- **Pandemic Assistance for Timber Harvesters and Haulers Program (PATHH)** provides support to timber harvesting and hauling businesses that experienced loss of at least 10 percent gross revenue from January 1 through December 1, 2020 (compared to the same periods in 2019). Individual loggers or truckers, or legal entities, may be eligible for up to $125,000 in financial assistance.

- **Pandemic Livestock Indemnity Program (PLIP)** provides financial assistance to support producers of eligible swine, chicken and turkey depopulation from March 1, 2020 through December 26, 2020. The depopulation of poultry or livestock must have been due to insufficient processing access resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Information on other USDA Pandemic Assistance Programs for Producers can be found on farmers.gov.

Please visit our ‘Important Dates to Remember’ section of this newsletter for upcoming program deadlines.
**Masks:** Due to CDC guidelines, we are now requiring masks to be worn by all employees, contractors, and visitors in all USDA buildings regardless of vaccination status. Service Centers in Indiana are still limiting in-person office visits to by-appointment-only. Anyone wishing to do business with FSA needs to schedule an appointment. FSA staff will also continue to work with customers via phone, email and other digital tools.

**USDA Rural Development (RD)** is working together with the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service Office to help meat processors build their business to meet growing demand. Honoring their commitment to rural America's prosperity and quality of life. RD is offering the following **Rural Development loans, grants, and loan guarantees**.

For more information concerning Rural Development loans, grants, and loan guarantees, you may contact Anthony Kirkland, Business Programs Director for Indiana Rural Development via phone at (260) 244-6266 Ext 114 or via email at Anthony.Kirkland@usda.gov.

The **Indiana State Department of Ag (ISDA)** will seek project proposals from Indiana’s specialty crop industry for funding from USDA’s Specialty Crop Block Grant Program beginning September 1st. Eligible projects must provide industry relief for the impact of COVID-19 and enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops in Indiana, defined as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, horticulture and nursery crops. ISDA press release and more information can be found on the above links.

Respectfully,
Your Indiana FSA Staff

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**USDA Announces Dates for Conservation Reserve Program Grasslands Signups**

*Grasslands Signup Deadline is Friday, August 20, 2021*

Agricultural producers and landowners in Indiana can apply for the **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Grasslands signup** from today until August 20. This year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) updated signup options to provide greater incentives for producers and increased the program’s conservation and climate benefits, including setting a minimum rental rate and identifying two national priority zones.

The CRP Grassland signup is competitive, and USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) will provide for annual rental payments for land devoted to conservation purposes.

**Grasslands Signup**

CRP Grasslands helps Indiana landowners and operators protect grassland, including rangeland, and pastureland and certain other lands, while maintaining the areas as working grazing lands. Protecting grasslands contributes positively to the economy of many regions, provides biodiversity of plant and animal populations, and provides important carbon sequestration benefits.

FSA has updated the Grasslands Signup to establish a minimum rental rate of $15 per acre, which will benefit 1,300 counties.

To focus on important wildlife corridors, FSA also identified **National Grassland Priority Zones**, providing extra incentives to producers for enrolling grasslands in important migratory corridors and environmentally sensitive areas – the Greater Yellowstone Elk Migration Corridor and the Severe Wind Erosion – Dust Bowl Zone. Counties within these two zones get extra ranking points as well as $5 added to their rental rate. The **CRP Grasslands Ranking Factors fact sheet** has additional information.
How to Sign Up

To enroll in the CRP Grasslands signup, producers and landowners should contact USDA by the August 20 deadline. Service Center staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. Because of the pandemic, some USDA Service Centers are open to limited visitors. Contact your Service Center to set up an in-person or phone appointment. Additionally, more information related to USDA’s response and relief for producers can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

More Information on CRP

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest voluntary private-lands conservation programs in the United States. It was originally intended to primarily control soil erosion and potentially stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production. The program has evolved over the years, providing many conservation and economic benefits. The program marked its 35-year anniversary this past December.

USDA Offers New Forest Management Incentive for Conservation Reserve Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is making available $12 million for use in making payments to forest landowners with land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in exchange for their implementing healthy forest management practices. Existing CRP participants can now sign up for the Forest Management Incentive (FMI), which provides financial incentives to landowners with land in CRP to encourage proper tree thinning and other practices.

Right now, less than 10% of land currently enrolled in CRP is dedicated to forestland. But, these nearly 2 million acres of CRP forestland, if properly managed, can have enormous benefits for natural resources by reducing soil erosion, protecting water quality, increasing water quantity, and diversifying local farm operations and rural economies.

Only landowners and agricultural producers with active CRP contracts involving forest cover can enroll. However, this does not include active CRP contracts that expire within two years. Existing CRP participants interested in tree thinning and prescribed burning must comply with the standards and specifications established in their CRP contract.

CRP participants will receive the incentive payment once tree thinning and/or other authorized forest management practices are completed.

The incentive payment is the lower of:

- The actual cost of completing the practice; or
- 75% of the payment rate offered by USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) if the practice is offered through NRCS conservation programs.

CRP signup is currently open. FSA will announce deadline later this year. Interested producers should contact their local FSA county office.

Applying for NAP Payments

The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) provides financial assistance to you for crops that aren’t eligible for crop insurance to protect against lower yields or crops unable to be planted due to natural disasters including freeze, hail, excessive moisture,
excessive wind or hurricanes, flood, excessive heat and qualifying drought (includes native grass for grazing), among others.

In order to participate, you must obtain NAP coverage for the crop year by the applicable deadline using form CCC-471 “Application for Coverage” and pay the service fee. Application closing dates vary by crop. Producers are also required to submit an acceptable crop acreage report. Additionally, NAP participants must provide:

- The quantity of all harvested production of the crop in which the producer held an interest during the crop year
- The disposition of the harvested crop, such as whether it is marketable, unmarketable, salvaged or used differently than intended
- Acceptable crop production records (when requested by FSA)

Producers who fail to report acreage and production information for NAP-covered crops could see reduced or zero NAP assistance. These reports are used to calculate the approved yield.

If your NAP-covered crops are affected by a natural disaster, notify your FSA office by completing Part B of form CCC-576 “Notice of Loss and Application for Payment.” This must be completed within 15 calendar days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent or 15 days of the final harvest date. For hand-harvested crops and certain perishable crops, you must notify FSA within 72 hours of when a loss becomes apparent.

To receive benefits, you must also complete Parts D, E, F and G of the CCC-576 “Notice of Loss and Application for Payment” within 60 days of the last day of coverage for the crop year for any NAP covered crops. The CCC-576 requires acceptable appraisal information. Producers must provide evidence of production and note whether the crop was marketable, unmarketable, salvaged or used differently than intended.

Eligible crops must be commercially produced agricultural commodities for which crop insurance is not available, including perennial grass forage and grazing crops, fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, bioenergy, and industrial crops.

For more information on NAP, contact your local USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov/nap.

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**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, the request will be denied. Although there are exceptions regarding the Stafford Act and emergencies, it's important to wait until you receive written approval of your project proposal before starting any actions.
Applications cannot be approved until FSA has copies of all permits and plans. 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.

Filing CCC-941 Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) Certifications

If you have experienced delays in receiving Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) payments, Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs) and Market Gains on Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs), it may be because you have not filed form CCC-941, Adjusted Gross Income Certification.

If you don’t have a valid CCC-941 on file for the applicable crop year you will not receive payments. All farm operator/tenants/owners who have not filed a CCC-941 and have pending payments should IMMEDIATELY file the form with their recording county FSA office. Farm operators and tenants are encouraged to ensure that their landowners have filed the form.

FSA can accept the CCC-941 for 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021. Unlike the past, you must have the CCC-941 certifying your AGI compliance before any payments can be issued.

Maintaining ARC/PLC Acreage

If you’re enrolled in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, you must protect all cropland and noncropland acres on the farm from wind and water erosion and noxious weeds. By signing ARC county or individual contracts and PLC contracts, you agree to effectively control noxious weeds on the farm according to sound agricultural practices. If you fail to take necessary actions to correct a maintenance problem on your farm that is enrolled in ARC or PLC, the County Committee may elect to terminate your contract for the program year.

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

Farmers and ranchers can use the Farm Loan Discovery Tool on farmers.gov to find information on USDA farm loans that may best fit their operations.

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.

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 receive 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.

For more information, contact your local USDA Service Center or visit farmers.gov.

Loans for Targeted Underserved Producers

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has several loan programs to help you start or continue in agriculture production. Farm ownership and operating loans are available.

While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, FSA has provided priority funding for members of targeted underserved applicants.

A targeted underserved applicant is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of his or her identity as members of the group without regard to his or her individual qualities.

For purposes of this program, targeted underserved groups are women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere.

Buffers Boast Benefits On & Off Farms

The word “buffer” may evoke a safety net, a filter or an area of shrubs and trees. In the landscape context, that’s pretty much what it is. A buffer, when referred to by a conservationist at the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), is a small strip of land of trees, shrubs and other plants. This strip provides protection from things like wind or pollutants entering waterways and plays a crucial role as a safety net for the environment.
If properly used, buffers remove more than 50 percent of nutrients and pesticides, 60 percent of some pathogens and 75 percent of sediment. In addition to trapping pollutants, buffers slow water runoff and increase the amount of water that enters the ground, recharging our aquifers and protecting communities downstream from flooding.

During the winter buffers help trap snow and cut down on soil erosion in areas with strong winds. They also can protect livestock and wildlife from harsh weather, shield buildings from wind damage and reduce noise and odor coming from a farm. Buffers also give many benefits for local wildlife. They provide food and shelter for many wildlife species like quail, rabbit and other fun-to-watch species while serving as corridor connectors that enable wildlife to move safely from one habitat area to another.

The NRCS helps private landowners create buffers on their land, along waterways and between fields. If used as part of a comprehensive conservation system, buffers make good use of areas that are not ideal for growing crops or other uses.

For more information, contact the district conservationist at your local USDA Service Center at: USDA Service Center Locator.

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**Important Dates to Remember**

**August 20** – Final Date to Submit an Offer for CRP Grasslands

**September 1** – NAP Sales Closing Date for Value Loss Crops for the Following Year
( Flowers for Fresh Cut, Onion Sets, Trufgrass Sod, Christmas Trees, Aquaculture, Ginseng, Mushrooms, etc)

**September 6** – USDA Service Center Closed in Observance of Labor Day

**September 15** – Final Acreage Reporting Date for Cucumbers (Planted 6/1-8/15 in Knox County)

**September 17** – Deadline to Apply for Pandemic Livestock Indemnity Program (PLIP)

**September 30** – Final Acreage Reporting Date for Value Loss & Controlled Environment Crop (for coming program year)

**September 30** – NAP Sales Closing Date for Garlic, Wheat, Barley, Rye and Mint for the following Year’s Crop

**October 15** - Deadline to apply for Pandemic Assistance Timber Harvesters & Haulers (PATHH)

**Ongoing** - Signup for Continuous CRP

**Ongoing** – Submit an Application for a Farm Storage Facility Loan

**Continuous** - Signup for Local County Office FSA Text Alerts

**Continuous** – Sign up for GovDelivery Newsletters, Bulletins and Indiana Press Releases(https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USFSA/subscriber/new/)

**Disaster Program Notice of Loss Filing Requirements**

- File **Emergency Livestock Assistance Program (ELAP)** Notice of Loss (NOL) (Honeybee NOL Must be Filed within 15 Days of When the Loss is First Apparent; Other ELAP covered Livestock Losses - Livestock Feed, Grazing & Farm-Raised Fish NOL Must be Filed within 30 Days of When the Loss is First Apparent)

- File **Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)** Notice of Loss within 30 Calendar Days of When the Livestock Loss is First Apparent.

- File **Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program** NOL 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 the Damage to the Crop or Loss of Production Becomes Apparent; or the Normal Harvest Date. **Note:** A producer’s signature is required on form CCC-576 when a Notice of Loss is submitted.

- Submit Application for the **Tree Assistance Program (TAP)** along with Supporting Documentation within 90 Calendar Days of the Disaster Event or the Date when the Loss is Apparent to the Producer.
Interest Rates

USDA announced loan interest rates for July 2021, which are effective July 1, 2021. USDA’s FSA loans provide important access to capital to help agricultural producers start or expand their farming operation, purchase equipment and storage structures, or meet cash flow needs.

FSA offers farm ownership and operating loans with favorable interest rates and terms to help eligible agricultural producers, whether multi-generational, long-time or new to the industry, obtain financing needed to start, expand or maintain a family agricultural operation. For many loan options, FSA sets aside funding for historically disadvantaged producers, including beginning, women, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and Hispanic farmers and ranchers.

Farm Loans

Interest rates for Operating and Ownership loans for August 2021 are as follows:

- **Farm Operating Loans** (Direct): 1.750%
- **Farm Ownership Loans** (Direct): 3.250%
- **Farm Ownership Loans** (Direct, Joint Financing): 2.500%
- **Farm Ownership Loans** (Down Payment): 1.500%
- **Emergency Loan** (Amount of Actual Loss): 2.750%

FSA also offers guaranteed loans through commercial lenders at rates set by those lenders.

You can find out which of these loans may be right for you by using our [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#).

FSA provides low-interest financing to producers to build or upgrade on-farm storage facilities and purchase handling equipment and loans that provide interim financing to help producers meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are low. Funds for these loans are provided through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) and are administered by FSA.

Commodity Loans (less than one year disbursed): 1.125%

Farm Storage Facility Loans:

- Three-year loan terms: 0.500%
- Five-year loan terms: 0.875%
- Seven-year loan terms: 1.125%
- Ten-year loan terms: 1.375%
- Twelve-year loan terms: 1.500%

Producers can explore available options on all FSA loan programs at [fsa.usda.gov](http://fsa.usda.gov) or by contacting your [local USDA Service Center](#).