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NEWSLETTER

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Iowa FSA Newsletter

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USDA Offers Agribusiness Mentoring to Farmers, Ranchers, and Agricultural Business Owners

The Iowa Farm Service Agency (FSA) is participating in a recently announced effort to mentor new and beginning farmers and ranchers, veterans, women, socially disadvantaged Americans, and others to enable them to better succeed in agribusiness. This announcement is part of a partnership which established a partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and SCORE, the nation's largest network of volunteer, expert business mentors.

SCORE mentors will partner not only with USDA and FSA, but the wide array of groups already hard at work serving new and beginning farmers and ranchers. These groups include, but are not limited to, cooperative extension and land grant universities, nonprofits, legal aid groups, banks, technical and farm advisors and so many more. This key partnership will allow FSA and all of these partners to expand and integrate outreach and technical assistance, and to connect current and retired farmers and agri-business experts with new farmers to provide mentoring, technical and financial assistance.

The SCORE mentorship effort is aimed at helping young Americans and those seeking second careers following military service who would like to pursue careers in agriculture, but feel the cost to enter the field is high. FSA and its partners plan to work with interested individuals, families and groups to develop business plans, attract operating capital and achieve their goals.

For more information about the SCORE-USDA partnership, see
<https://newfarmers.usda.gov/mentorship>

Livestock Forage Losses

Producers in Adair, Appanoose, Clarke, Davis, Decatur, Henry, Keokuk, Jefferson, Lucas, Madison, Mahaska, Marion, Monroe, Ringgold, Union, Van Buren, Wapello, Warren, and Wayne counties are eligible to apply for 2017 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) benefits on small grain, native pasture, improved pasture, annual ryegrass, and forage sorghum. Please note, all the listed counties are not eligible for all crops.

LFP provides compensation to eligible livestock producers who suffer grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land or fire on federally managed land.

County committees can only accept LFP applications after notification is received by the National Office of qualifying drought or if a federal agency prohibits producers from grazing normal permitted livestock on federally managed lands due to qualifying fire.

Eligible livestock producers must complete a CCC-853 and the required supporting documentation no later than January 30, 2018 for 2017 losses.

Additional Information about LFP, including eligible livestock and fire criteria, is available at your local FSA office or online at: www.fsa.usda.gov.

Financial Hardship and Loan Servicing

Many farm loan borrowers' payments are due on Jan. 1. FSA expects and encourages prompt payment. However, for borrowers who cannot make their payments due to adversity such as a natural disaster or production difficulties beyond their control, FSA is committed to providing our farm loan borrowers with the tools necessary to be successful. A part of ensuring this success is providing guidance and counsel from loan or loan servicing application, through the term of your loan, and after. In order for FSA to help, you must alert your local FSA office to any of the following:

- Any proposed or significant changes in the farming operation
- Any significant changes to family income or expenses
- The development of problem situations
- Any losses or proposed significant changes in security

There are options for FSA loan customers during financial stress. If you are a borrower who is unable to make payments on a loan, contact your local FSA Service Center to learn about the options available to you.

If past due on payments, FSA will notify you of your options with a Notice of Availability of Loan Servicing. Please pay special attention to this notice as it provides you with your options for FSA servicing programs and outlines specific deadlines that you must meet. Failure to meet these statutory deadlines may significantly limit your options and FSA's ability to help address your farm's financial difficulties.

For more information on FSA farm loan programs, visit www.fsa.usda.gov. Please contact your local FSA Service Center if you have any questions or would like to schedule an appointment to meet with the loan staff to discuss your options.

Unauthorized Disposition of Grain

If loan grain has been disposed of through feeding, selling or any other form of disposal without prior written authorization from the county office staff, it is considered unauthorized disposition. The financial penalties for unauthorized dispositions are severe and a producer's name will be placed on a loan violation list for a two-year period. Always call before you haul any grain under loan.

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>.

Cover Crop Guidelines

Recently the Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Risk Management Agency (RMA) worked together to develop consistent, simple and a flexible policy for cover crop practices.

The termination and reporting guidelines were updated for cover crops.

Termination:

The cover crop termination guidelines provide the timeline for terminating cover crops, are based on zones and apply to non-irrigated cropland. To view the zones and additional guidelines visit <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/landuse/crops/> and click "Cover Crop Termination Guidelines."

Reporting:

The intended use of cover only will be used to report cover crops. This includes crops

that were terminated by tillage and reported with an intended use code of green manure. An FSA policy change will allow cover crops to be hayed and grazed. Program eligibility for the cover crop that is being hayed or grazed will be determined by each specific program.

If the crop reported as cover only is harvested for any use other than forage or grazing and is not terminated properly, then that crop will no longer be considered a cover crop.

Crops reported with an intended use of cover only will not count toward the total cropland on the farm. In these situations a subsequent crop will be reported to account for all cropland on the farm.

Cover crops include grasses, legumes, and forbs, for seasonal cover and other conservation purposes. Cover crops are primarily used for erosion control, soil health improvement, and water quality improvement. The cover crop may be terminated by natural causes, such as frost, or intentionally terminated through chemical application,

crimping, rolling, tillage or cutting. A cover crop managed and terminated according to NRCS Cover Crop Termination Guidelines is **not** considered a crop for crop insurance purposes.

Cover crops can be planted: with no subsequent crop planted, before a subsequent crop, after prevented planting acreage, after a planted crop, or into a standing crop.

Marketing Assistance Available for 2017 in Iowa

The 2014 Farm Bill authorized 2014-2018 crop year Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs).

In Iowa, crop prices are nearing a range where LDPs may be applicable, so producers should become familiar with the process to access this assistance.

MALs and LDPs provide financing and marketing assistance for various crops, as well as other commodities such as feed grains, soybeans and other oilseeds, pulse crops, rice, peanuts, cotton, wool and honey. MALs provide producers interim financing after harvest to help them meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows.

A producer who is eligible to obtain an MAL, but agrees to forgo the loan, may obtain an LDP if such a payment is available.

To be eligible for an MAL or an LDP, producers must have a beneficial interest in the commodity, in addition to other requirements. A producer retains beneficial interest when control of and title to the commodity is maintained. For an LDP, the producer must retain beneficial interest in the commodity from the time of planting through the date the producer filed [Form CCC-633EZ \(page 1\)](#) in the FSA County Office. For more information, producers should contact their local FSA county office or view the [LDP Fact Sheet](#).

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, 2018, 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>.

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).