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Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Iowa FSA Newsletter

Iowa Farm Service Agency

10500 Buena Vista Court
Des Moines, IA 50322

Phone: 515-254-1540
Fax: 855-218-8672

www.fsa.usda.gov/ia

State Executive Director:
Amanda De Jong

State Committee:
James Stillman, Chair
Laura Cunningham
Jerry Mohr
Ralph Morales
Patricia Swanson

To find contact information for
your local office go to
www.fsa.usda.gov/ia

USDA Reminds Producers of Feb. 28 Deadline for Conservation Reserve Program General Signup

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reminds agricultural producers interested in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) 2020 general signup to enroll by February 28, 2020. This signup is available to farmers and private landowners who are either enrolling for the first time or re-enrolling for another 10- to 15-year term.

Farmers and ranchers who enroll in CRP receive yearly rental payments for voluntarily establishing long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as "covers"), which can control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat on marginally productive agricultural lands.

CRP has 22 million acres enrolled, but the 2018 Farm Bill lifted the cap to 27 million acres.

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest private-lands conservation programs in the U.S. 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. Marking its 35th anniversary in 2020, CRP has had many successes, including:

- Preventing more than 9 billion tons of soil from eroding, enough soil to fill 600 million dump trucks;
- Reducing nitrogen and phosphorous runoff relative to annually tilled cropland by 95 and 85 percent respectively;
- Sequestering an annual average of 49 million tons of greenhouse gases, equal to taking 9 million cars off the road;

- Creating more than 3 million acres of restored wetlands while protecting more than 175,000 stream miles with riparian forest and grass buffers, enough to go around the world 7 times; and
- Benefiting bees and other pollinators and increased populations of ducks, pheasants, turkey, bobwhite quail, prairie chickens, grasshopper sparrows and many other birds.

The CRP continuous signup is ongoing, which enables producers to enroll for [certain practices](#). FSA plans to open the Soil Health and Income Protection Program, a CRP pilot program, in early 2020, and the 2020 CRP Grasslands signup runs from March 16, 2020 to May 15, 2020.

To enroll in CRP, contact your local FSA county office or visit fsa.usda.gov/crp. To locate your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-locator.

Reminder to FSA Direct and Guaranteed Borrowers with Real Estate Security

Farm Service Agency would like to remind farm loan borrowers who have pledged real estate as security for their loans, of key items for maintaining loan collateral. It is required that borrowers must obtain prior consent, or approval, by either FSA, for direct loans, or by a guaranteed lender, for any transaction affecting real estate security. Examples of these transactions include, but are not limited to:

- Leases of any kind;
- Easements of any kind;
- Subordinations;
- Partial releases, and
- Sales

Failure to meet or follow the requirements set forth in the loan agreement, promissory note, and other security instruments could lead to nonmonetary default which could jeopardize your current and future loans.

It is critical that borrowers keep an open line of communication with their FSA loan staff or guaranteed lender when it comes to changes in their operation. For more information on borrower responsibilities, read [Your FSA Farm Loan Compass](#).

USDA Swine Study for Small and Large Enterprises

Starting in June 2020, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS), in collaboration with the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), will conduct national studies of U.S. small and large enterprise swine operations.

Iowa producers are included in these studies, which take an in-depth look at small (fewer than 1,000 pigs) and large (1,000 or more pigs) U.S. swine operations and provide information regarding health and management practices to the U.S. swine industry. Information collected will be used to inform disease management and preparedness strategies to safeguard the swine industry.

Large Enterprise Study (1,000 or more pigs)

Representatives from NASS will visit participating operations from July through August 2020 to complete a questionnaire. If you choose to continue in the study, USDA or state veterinary health professionals will visit you from September 2020 through January 2021 to complete a second questionnaire and discuss free biologic testing (oral fluids and feces).

Approximately 2,700 operations will be selected from 13 of the Nation's top swine-producing states representing about 90 percent of the U.S. swine operations with 1,000 or more pigs.

Small Enterprise Study (Fewer than 1,000 pigs)

In June 2020, selected producers will be mailed a letter describing the study and be provided with a questionnaire to complete and return. Producers who don't respond to the questionnaire will be called by a NASS representative to arrange a convenient time to complete the questionnaire via a telephone interview.

Approximately 5,000 swine operations from 38 states will be asked to participate in the study. These states account for about 95 percent of U.S. swine operations with fewer than 1,000 pigs.

Participation in any NAHMS study is voluntary. The privacy of every questionnaire participant is protected. Data will only be presented in an aggregate or summary manner.

For more information, please contact Charles Haley at 970-494-7216 or charles.a.haley@aphis.usda.gov.

FSA Encourages Producers to Enroll Soon in Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) encourages agricultural producers to enroll now in the Agriculture Risk Loss (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs. March 15, 2020 is the enrollment deadline for the 2019 crop year.

Although more than 200,000 producers have enrolled to date, FSA anticipates 1.5 million producers will enroll for ARC and PLC. By enrolling soon, producers can beat the rush as the deadline nears.

FSA offices have multiple programs competing for the time and attention of our staff. Because of the importance and complexities of the ARC and PLC programs; and to ensure FSA meets your program delivery expectations, please do not wait to start the enrollment process. Call your FSA county office and make an appointment soon to ensure your elections are made and contracts signed well ahead of the deadlines.

ARC and PLC provide financial protections to farmers from substantial drops in crop prices or revenues and are vital economic safety nets for most American farms.

The programs cover the following commodities: barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium and short grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

Until March 15, producers who have not yet enrolled in ARC or PLC for 2019 can enroll for both 2019 and 2020 during the same visit to an FSA county office unless yield updates are requested. Additionally, farm owners have a one-time opportunity to update PLC payment yields that take effect beginning with crop year 2020. If the owner accompanies the producer to the office, the yield update and enrollments may be completed during the same office visit.

More Information

For more information on ARC and PLC, download our [program fact sheet](#) or our [2014-2018 farm bills comparison fact sheet](#). Online ARC and PLC election decision tools are available at www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc. To enroll, contact your [FSA county office](#) for an appointment.

FSA Can Help with On-Farm Propane Storage

Winter months in Iowa can be long and cold. For several years, farmers have faced propane storage shortages. FSA's [Farm Storage Facility Loan \(FSFL\) program](#) provides funding for on-farm liquified petroleum tanks.

FSFL low-interest financing can be used to build or upgrade storage facilities and to purchase portable (new or used) structures, equipment, storage and handling trucks. Liquified petroleum tanks are covered for eligible commodities for the use of fuel for grain dryer equipment.

Loans up to \$50,000 can be secured by a promissory note/security agreement. Loans exceeding \$100,000 require additional security.

Producers do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply. The loans are designed to assist a diverse range of farming operations, including conventional operations, 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 FSFLs and how these loans can help with your on-site propane tank storage needs, contact your local FSA county office.

Communication is Key in Lending

Farm Service Agency (FSA) is committed to providing our farm loan borrowers the tools necessary to be a success. A part of ensuring this success is providing guidance and counsel from the loan application process through the borrower's graduation to commercial lending institutions. While it is FSA's commitment to advise borrowers as they identify goals and evaluate progress, it is crucial for borrowers to communicate with their farm loan staff when changes occur. It is the borrower's responsibility to alert FSA 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

In addition, if a farm loan borrower cannot make payments to suppliers, other creditors, or FSA on time, contact your farm loan staff immediately to discuss loan servicing options.

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

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 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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