

October 2018



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

# NEWSLETTER

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## Maryland FSA Newsletter

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### Maryland Farm Service Agency

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[www.fsa.usda.gov/md](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/md)

**State Executive Director:**  
**Jim Eichhorst**

**State Committee:**  
**Jenny Rhodes, Chairperson**  
**Steve Ernst**

### USDA Issues Safety-Net and Conservation Payments to Maryland Farmers

USDA Maryland Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that approximately \$5.8 million will be paid to Maryland farms that enrolled in Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) for 2017 market downturns. Additionally, Maryland FSA will distribute \$10.6 million in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) rental payments to landowners for their commitment to conservation stewardship.

PLC payments have triggered for 2017 barley, canola, corn, grain sorghum, wheat and other crops. In the next few months payments will be triggered for rice, chickpeas, sunflower seeds, flaxseed, mustard seed, rapeseed, safflower, crambe, and sesame seed. Producers with bases enrolled in ARC for 2017 crops can visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc) for updated crop yields, prices, revenue

**Steve Isaacson**  
**Pat Langenfelder**

To find contact information for your local office go to [www.fsa.usda.gov/md](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/md)

and payment rates. In Maryland, 23 counties have experienced a drop in price and/or revenues below the benchmark price established by the ARC or PLC programs and will receive payments.

ARC and PLC payments by county can vary because average county yields will differ.

Also, this week, USDA will begin issuing 2018 CRP payments to support voluntary conservation efforts on private lands. In Maryland, several thousand landowners will receive compensation for their efforts to improve water quality, reduce soil erosion and improve wildlife habitat.

For more information about USDA programs or to locate the nearest USDA Service Center, visit <https://www.farmers.gov/>.

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## USDA Offers Secure, Convenient Online Business Options

*Farmers, Ranchers and Foresters Encouraged to Sign-In/Sign-Up*

Farmers, ranchers and agricultural producers in Maryland have new online options to access U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs. Through USDA's new streamlined process producers can now register, track and manage their applications for the Market Facilitation Program (MFP) and 2017 Wildfires Hurricanes Indemnity Program (2017 WHIP) on the secure and convenient <https://www.farmers.gov/sign-in>.

MFP and 2017 WHIP are administered by FSA and are currently available on the <https://www.farmers.gov/sign-in>. To apply and manage their applications online, producers first need to sign up for the Level 2 eAuthentication access. Enrolling is a two-step process. For producers who do not already have an account can register for an account at [www.eauth.usda.gov](http://www.eauth.usda.gov). After creating the account, customers receive a confirmation email with instructions for identity verification. Identity verification can be completed online or by presenting a government issued photo ID in person at a USDA service center.

In addition to the programs available through the farmers.gov portal, other programs offered by FSA can be managed at the [Online Services page](#) with the same eAuthentication credentials.

Individual producers have many options available for conducting business online with USDA agencies including FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Risk Management Agency (RMA). Online tools such as the NRCS [Conservation Client Gateway](#) offer customers added flexibility and a secure web portal to track payments, report completed practices, request assistance, and sign documents. Level 2 eAuthentication access is not yet available for entities, but it is available for individuals.

To learn more about conducting business with USDA online and to locate the nearest USDA service center, visit [www.farmers.gov](http://www.farmers.gov).

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## ARC/PLC Acreage Maintenance

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

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## Update Your Records

FSA is cleaning up our producer record database. If you have any unreported changes of address, zip code, phone number, email address or an incorrect name or business name on file they need to be reported to our office. Changes in your farm operation, like the addition of a farm by lease or purchase, need to be reported to our office as well. Producers participating in FSA and NRCS programs are required to timely report changes in their farming operation to the County Committee in writing and update their CCC-902 Farm Operating Plan.

If you have any updates or corrections, please call your local FSA office to update your records.

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## Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybee, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)

The Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) provides emergency assistance to eligible livestock, honeybee, and farm-raised fish producers who have losses due to disease, adverse weather or other conditions, such as blizzards and wildfires, not covered by other agricultural disaster assistance programs.

Eligible livestock losses include grazing losses not covered under the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP), loss of purchased feed and/or mechanically harvested feed due to an eligible adverse weather event, additional cost of transporting water because of an eligible drought and additional cost associated with gathering livestock to treat for cattle tick fever.

Eligible honeybee losses include loss of purchased feed due to an eligible adverse weather event, cost of additional feed purchased above normal quantities due to an eligible adverse weather condition, colony losses in excess of normal mortality due to an eligible weather event or loss condition, including CCD, and hive losses due to eligible adverse weather.

Eligible farm-raised fish losses include death losses in excess of normal mortality and/or loss of purchased feed due to an eligible adverse weather event.

Producers who suffer eligible livestock, honeybee, or farm-raised fish losses from Oct. 1, 2017 to Sept. 30, 2018 must file:

- A notice of loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent or by Nov. 1, 2018
- An application for payment by Nov. 1, 2018

The following ELAP Fact Sheets (by topic) are available online:

- ELAP for Farm-Raised Fish Fact Sheet
- ELAP for Livestock Fact Sheet
- ELAP for Honeybees Fact Sheet

To view these and other FSA program fact sheets, visit the FSA fact sheet web page at [www.fsa.usda.gov/factsheets](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/factsheets).

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## ASKFSA

Are you looking for answers to your FSA questions? Then ASK FSA at [askfsa.custhelp.com](http://askfsa.custhelp.com).

AskFSA is an online resource that helps you easily find information and answers to your FSA questions no matter where you are or what device you use. It is for ALL customers, including underserved farmers and ranchers who wish to be enrolled in FSA loans, farm, and conservation programs.

Through AskFSA you can:

- Access our knowledge base 24/7
- Receive answers to your questions faster
- Submit a question and receive a timely response from an FSA expert
- Get notifications when answers important to you and your farming operation are updated

Customize your account settings and view responses at any time.

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## USDA Microloans Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property

*Producers, Including Beginning and Underserved Farmers, have a New Option to Gain Access to Land*

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is offering farm ownership microloans, creating a new financing avenue for farmers to buy and improve property. These microloans are especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming, and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations.

The microloan program has been hugely successful, providing more than 16,800 low-interest loans, totaling over \$373 million to producers across the country. Microloans have helped farmers and ranchers with operating costs, such as feed, fertilizer, tools, fencing, equipment, and living expenses since 2013. Seventy percent of loans have gone to new farmers.

Now, microloans will be available to also help with farm land and building purchases, and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate loans to help farmers strengthen their operations. Microloans provide up to \$50,000 to qualified producers, and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

To learn more about the FSA microloan program visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans), or contact your local FSA office.

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## Supervised Credit

Farm Service Agency (FSA) Farm Loan programs are considered supervised credit. Unlike loans from a commercial lender, FSA loans are intended to be temporary in nature. Therefore, it is our goal to help you graduate to commercial credit, and our farm loan staff is available to help borrowers through training and credit counseling.

The FSA team will help borrowers identify their goals to ensure financial success. Through this process, FSA staff will advise borrowers in developing strategies and a plan to meet your operation's goals and graduate to commercial credit. Ultimately, the borrower is responsible for the success of the farming operation, but FSA's staff will help in an advisory role to provide the tools necessary to help you achieve your operational goals and manage your finances.

For more information on FSA farm loan programs, visit [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

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## Selected Interest Rates and Dates to Remember

Selected Interest Rates for October 2018	
90-Day Treasury Bill	2.500%
Farm Operating Loans - Direct	3.750%
Farm Ownership Loans - Direct	4.125%
Farm Ownership Loans - Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.500%
Emergency Loans	3.750%
Farm Storage Facility Loans (7 years)	2.875%
Sugar Storage Facility Loans	3.000%
Commodity Loans 1996 - Present	3.500%

Dates to Remember	
Nov. 5	COC ballots mailed to eligible voters.
Nov. 12	MD FSA offices closed for Veterans Day.
Nov. 15	Crop reporting for PRG (pasture, rangeland, and forage covered by crop insurance).
Nov. 20	NAP application deadline for perennial crops (other than those intended for

	forage), peaches, apples, cherries, grapes, and berries.
Nov. 22	MD FSA offices closed for Thanksgiving Day.
Dec. 3	Last day to return COC election ballots to the USDA service center.

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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).