

May 2016



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Minnesota FSA Newsletter: May 2016

Minnesota Farm Service Agency **A Message to Our Producers...**

375 Jackson Street
Suite 400
St. Paul, MN 55101

Phone: 651-602-7700
Fax: 855-719-9917

www.fsa.usda.gov/mn

State Executive Director:
Grant Herfindahl

State Committee:
David Haugo, Chair
Scott Winslow, Member
Deb Crusoe, Member
Richard Peterson, Member
Richard Vogt, Member

It's nearly mid-May and for many it appears the crops are in the ground and ready for a warm growing season. Now we have only but to wait for good weather to befall us! For some areas, that requires some much needed precipitation and for others... well, maybe just some good ol' sunshine and warm weather will do. While you're waiting on the weather, why not make a trip into your local FSA office to report your crops? Don't forget, the deadline to report most crops is July 15, 2016 and it's a good idea to get the reporting completed while the information is fresh in your mind. Call your local office before hand to set up an appointment.

In addition, I'd like to draw attention to the upcoming Women in Ag Summer Seminar on the Farm Transfer Process (information below). It should be an excellent opportunity for many to learn some of the ins and outs of the transfer process and important estate planning. Extension and FSA really want to see these events take off, so please pass this on to anyone you think might be interested.

Best of luck this Spring! *Grant Herfindahl*

Division Chiefs:

Angela Hanson
Laurie Moss
Stuart Shelstad
Michelle Page

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

Women in Ag Summer Seminar

Are you interested in learning more about the farm transfer process? If the answer is "yes", then we have the event for you! Come join University of Minnesota Extension, along with USDA FSA, as we venture into the world of Farm Transfer and Estate Planning. This Women in Ag seminar will feature speakers Gary Hachfeld, Extension educator, and Susan Stokes with Farmers' Legal Action Group (FLAG). Topics to be covered include estate plans, farm transfers, long-term healthcare, and ways to identify and work with potential successors.

**Women in Ag Summer Seminar
Farm Transfer and Estate Planning**

June 1, 2016 - 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Registration begins at 9:30 a.m.

Extension Willmar Regional Office- Mid Central Research & Outreach Center
1802 18th St. NE
Willmar, MN 56201-2598

Cost: \$20 Payment can be made the day of event (Cash, check, or credit card)

Please **register by May 30** by phone at #320-235-0726 or by email at foxxx055@umn.edu.

Questions? Contact Betty Berning at bberning@umn.edu, Pauline VanNurden at pvannurd@umn.edu, or Lindsay Mutegi at lindsay.mutegi@mn.usda.gov.

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in this function should contact Lindsay Mutegi at 651-602-7705 or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339 by May 26, 2016.

CRP Acreage Maintenance

CRP participants are responsible for ensuring that their CRP acres are properly maintained through the contract period, as agreed to in the CRP contract (CRP-1 Appendix) and its conservation plan of operations (CPO). FSA encourages participants to regularly visit and evaluate the condition of their CRP acres, to ensure:

- The vegetative cover and conservation practice that was agreed to in the CPO is being properly maintained to adequately control erosion, protect air and water quality and enhance wildlife habitat.
- The CRP acreage is in compliance with the State noxious weed law as determined by the State or local noxious weed commission.
- Undesirable weeds, invasive plants, insects, pests and rodents are being controlled on the entire CRP acreage covered by the CPO, as determined by the FSA County Committee (COC), so that the existing CRP cover, as well as surrounding landowners, air and water quality, or wildlife habitat, are not adversely impacted.

Note: FSA has authority to determine that a violation has occurred when any portion of the CRP acreage is infested, degraded, destroyed or otherwise compromised to the point that the established conservation practice no longer functions as intended.

Failure to adequately maintain CRP acreage may result in a compliance violation. FSA randomly spot checks CRP acreage; if the acreage is found to have areas not in compliance with the CPO, a violation will be determined by the COC. However, FSA is not required to notify participants of potential areas of violation on their CRP acreage. When a violation occurs, the participant will either be assessed a payment reduction on the affected acres or the affected acres may be terminated and payments refunded.

CRP maintenance activities may be conducted anytime outside the established primary nesting and brood rearing season, without FSA approval; however, **spot treatment of specific areas in critical need of maintenance may be conducted at anytime with prior approval by FSA.** To request approval of spot treatment of your CRP acres, please contact the local FSA office.

Additional Responsibilities

CRP participants have additional responsibilities during their CRP contract period including, but not limited to the following:

- Annually certify your CRP acreage with FSA prior to July 15.
- Not disturb the CRP acreage during the primary nesting and brood rearing season, except when prior approval by FSA has been granted to conduct spot maintenance treatment in the immediate area of infestation. **Participants should contact their local office for their primary nesting season dates.**
- Conduct applicable management activities listed in the CPO as scheduled.
- Request approval from FSA in advance of conducting any acreage management not scheduled in the CPO, such as burning, light disking, managed haying and grazing, etc.
- Notify FSA of any changes that may affect CRP payment eligibility or interest in the CRP contract acreage such as transfer of ownership, establishment of trusts or entities, etc.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is also available to assist you with advice and recommendations on how to best establish and maintain the vegetative cover on CRP acreage. Please review your CRP-1 Appendix for details on your responsibilities as a CRP participant; if you do not have a copy of the applicable Appendix, please contact your [local FSA office](#) to receive one.

USDA Offers New Loans for Portable Farm Storage and Handling Equipment

Portable Equipment Can Help Producers, including Small-Scale and Local Farmers, Get Products to Market Quickly

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will provide a new financing option to help farmers purchase portable storage and handling equipment. The loans, which now include a smaller microloan option with lower down payments, are designed to help producers, including new, small and mid-sized producers, grow their businesses and markets.

The program also offers a new "microloan" option, which allows applicants seeking less than \$50,000 to qualify for a reduced down payment of five percent and no requirement to provide three years of production history. Farms and ranches of all sizes are eligible. The microloan option is expected to be of particular benefit to smaller farms and ranches, and specialty crop producers who may not have access to commercial storage or on-farm storage after harvest. These producers can

invest in equipment like conveyers, scales or refrigeration units and trucks that can store commodities before delivering them to markets. Producers do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply.

Earlier this year, FSA significantly expanded the list of commodities eligible for Farm Storage Facility Loan. Eligible commodities now include aquaculture; floriculture; fruits (including nuts) and vegetables; corn, grain sorghum, rice, oilseeds, oats, wheat, triticale, spelt, buckwheat, lentils, chickpeas, dry peas sugar, peanuts, barley, rye, hay, honey, hops, maple sap, unprocessed meat and poultry, eggs, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt and renewable biomass. FSFL microloans can also be used to finance wash and pack equipment used post-harvest, before a commodity is placed in cold storage.

To learn more about Farm Storage Facility Loans, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport or contact a local FSA county office. To find your local FSA county office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

USDA Expands Safety-Net for Dairy Operations Adding Next-Generation Family Members

Dairy farms participating in the Margin Protection Program (MPP) can now update their production history when an eligible family member joins the operation. The voluntary program, established by the 2014 Farm Bill, protects participating dairy producers when the margin – the difference between the price of milk and feed costs – falls below levels of protection selected by the applicant.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) published a final rule which makes these changes effective on April 13, 2016. Any dairy operation already enrolled in the Margin Protection Program that had an intergenerational transfer occur will have an opportunity to increase the dairy operations production history during the 2017 registration and annual coverage election period. The next election period begins on July 1, 2016, and ends on Sept. 30, 2016. For intergenerational transfers occurring on or after July 1, 2016, notification must be made to the FSA within 60 days of purchasing the additional cows. Each participating dairy operation is authorized one intergenerational transfer at any time of its choosing until 2018.

For \$100 a year, dairy producers can receive basic catastrophic protection that covers 90 percent of milk production at a \$4 margin coverage level. For additional premiums, operations can protect 25 to 90 percent of production history with margin coverage levels from \$4.50 to \$8, in 50 cent increments. Annual enrollment in the program is required in order to receive margin protection. The final rule also provides improved risk protection for dairy farmers that pay premiums to buy-up higher levels of coverage by clarifying that 90 percent of production is covered below the \$4 level even if a lower percentage was selected above the \$4 margin.

Earlier this year, FSA gave producers the opportunity to pay their premium through additional options including via their milk cooperative or handler. This rule facilitates those options and also clarifies that the catastrophic level protection at \$4 will always cover 90 percent of the production history, even if a producer selected a less than a 90 percent percentage for the buy-up coverage.

Assuming current participation, had the Margin Protection Program existed from 2009 to 2014, premiums and fees would have totaled \$500 million while providing producers with \$2.5 billion in financial assistance, nearly \$1 billion more than provided by the old Milk Income Loss Contract program during the same period.

For more information, visit FSA online at www.fsa.usda.gov/dairy or stop by a local FSA office and ask about the Margin Protection Program. To find a local FSA office in your area, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

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 October 1, 2015 to September 30, 2016 must file:

- A notice of loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent or by November 1, 2016
- An application for payment by November 1, 2016

The Farm Bill caps ELAP disaster funding at \$20 million per federal fiscal year.

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.

Filing a Notice of Loss

The CCC-576, Notice of Loss, is used to report failed acreage and prevented planting and may be completed by any producer with an interest in the crop. Timely filing a Notice of Loss is required for all crops including grasses. For losses on crops covered by the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), you must file a CCC-576, Notice of Loss, in the FSA County Office within 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent or 15 calendar days after the normal harvest date.

Producers of hand-harvested crops must notify FSA of damage or loss through the administrative County Office within 72 hours of the date of damage or loss first becomes apparent. This notification can be provided by filing a CCC-576, email, fax or phone. Producers who notify the County Office

by any method other than by filing the CCC-576 are still required to file a CCC-576, Notice of Loss, within the required 15 calendar days.

If filing for prevented planting, an acreage report and CCC-576 must be filed within 15 calendar days of the final planting date for the crop.

2016 Acreage Reporting Dates

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

Acreage reporting dates vary by crop and by county so please contact your local FSA office for a list of county-specific deadlines. The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the applicable 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 applicable 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.

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

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

Loans for Targeted Underserved Producers

FSA has a number of loan programs available to assist applicants to begin or continue in agriculture production. Loans are available for operating type loans and/or to purchase or improve farms or ranches.

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.

Youth Loans

The Farm Service Agency makes loans to youth to establish and operate agricultural income-producing projects in connection with 4-H clubs, FFA and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is \$5000.

Youth Loan Eligibility Requirements:

- Be a citizen of the United States (which includes Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) or a legal resident alien
- Be 10 years to 20 years of age
- Comply with FSA's general eligibility requirements
- Be unable to get a loan from other sources
- Conduct a modest income-producing project in a supervised program of work as outlined above
- Demonstrate capability of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. The project supervisor must recommend the youth loan applicant, along with providing adequate supervision.

Stop by the county office for help preparing and processing the application forms.

Looking for an exciting new career? Think FSA!

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is an exciting and rewarding place to start, build, and/or continue your career. Be part of our team and support the well-being of Minnesota agriculture and the American public.

FSA's diverse culture and benefits allow for a healthy balance between your career and home life. In addition to a generous salary, FSA offers a friendly and professional working environment with a diverse workforce, flexible hours/work schedules, and other family-friendly benefits such as: paid vacation and sick leave, paid holidays, retirement and supplemental savings plan, a wide array of health, dental, vision, and life insurance plans, flexible spending accounts, and long-term care insurance. Working for the U.S. Department of Agriculture will afford you the opportunity to contribute to projects that positively impact the lives of over 300 million people. Explore a career with the U.S. Department of Agriculture at www.usajobs.gov. New job openings are posted on a regular basis. Interested individuals can search for career opportunities based upon keywords and/or specific locations as well as create search profiles and job announcement notifications.

The Farm Service Agency is seeking candidates with farm experience and/or knowledge to perform work in support of Minnesota agriculture and farmers. Individuals who are interested in applying for these job opportunities will need to apply on-line at www.usajobs.gov. To search for FSA opportunities, select the following from the USAjobs home screen:

- Enter "**Farm Service Agency**" (with quotation marks) in *Keyword* space
- Enter **Minnesota** in *Location* space
- Select **U.S. Citizens** radio button
- Select the blue **Search** button

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).

