



NEWSLETTER



Mississippi Farm Service Agency (FSA)

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Michael R. Sullivan

Next State Committee Meeting:

Sept. 9, 2015 at 10:00 A.M.

Please contact your [local FSA Office](#) for questions specific to your operation or county.

Maintaining CRP Cover

CRP cover maintenance is the participant's responsibility. The cover must conform to the approved Conservation Plan. Before destroying approved cover by clearing for a house site, pond, road, power line or pipeline, contact your FSA office.

Partner's Corner

Delta Area Voluntary Metering Program

To avoid mandatory metering, Delta farmers are urged to participate in a voluntary metering program aimed to reduce the water deficit. For more information, visit www.deq.state.ms.us and click Delta Metering Program.

AUGUST 2015 MISSISSIPPI FSA NEWSLETTER UPDATES

USDA Announces Conservation Incentives for Working Grass, Range and Pasture Lands

Beginning Sept. 1, farmers and ranchers can apply for financial assistance to help conserve working grasslands, rangeland and pastureland while maintaining the areas as livestock grazing lands.

The initiative is part of the voluntary Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), a federally funded program that for 30 years has assisted agricultural producers with the cost of restoring, enhancing and protecting certain grasses, shrubs and trees to improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and reduce loss of wildlife habitat. In return, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. CRP has helped farmers and ranchers prevent more than 8 billion tons of soil from eroding, reduce nitrogen and phosphorous runoff relative to cropland by 95 and 85 percent respectively, and even sequester 43 million tons of greenhouse gases annually, equal to taking 8 million cars off the road.

The CRP-Grasslands initiative will provide participants who establish long-term, resource-conserving covers with annual rental payments up to 75 percent of the grazing value of the land. Cost-share assistance also is available for up to 50 percent of the covers and other practices, such as cross fencing to support rotational grazing or improving pasture cover to benefit pollinators or other wildlife. Participants may still conduct common grazing practices, produce hay, mow, or harvest for seed production, conduct fire rehabilitation, and construct firebreaks and fences.

With the publication of the CRP regulation, the Farm Service Agency will accept applications on an ongoing basis beginning Sept. 1, 2015, with those applications scored against published ranking criteria, and approved based on the competitiveness of the offer. The ranking period will occur at least once per year and be announced at least 30 days prior to its start. The end of the first ranking period will be Nov. 20, 2015.

To learn more about participating in CRP-Grasslands or SAFE, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/crp or consult with the local Farm Service Agency county office. To locate a nearby Farm Service Agency office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>. To learn more about the 30th anniversary of CRP, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/CRPis30 or follow on Twitter using #CRPis30.

Mississippi Counties Urging Eligible Producers to Vote in 2015 FSA County Committee Elections

The election of agricultural producers to Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees is important to ALL farmers and ranchers, whether you are a beginning or longtime producer, or whether you have a large or small operation. Every eligible agricultural producer should participate in these elections because FSA county committees are a link between your agricultural community and the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Farmers and ranchers who serve on FSA county committees apply their judgement and knowledge to help with the decisions necessary to administer FSA programs in their counties, ensuring the needs of local producers are met. FSA county committees operate within official federal regulations so that local input is provided on federal programs such as:

- Income safety-net loans and payments
- Conservation programs
- Incentive, indemnity and disaster payments for some commodities
- Emergency programs

ELECTIONS *continued on page 3*

**DO YOU WANT TO RECEIVE MONTHLY FSA UPDATES?
IF SO, SUBSCRIBE NOW!!!**

All newsletters, general reminders and program information have been distributed by FSA electronically. Information can also be obtained at a local FSA office. To receive electronic publications, please subscribe now at website: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/subscribe>

If you are already receiving newsletters and bulletins via e-mail, no further action is required. To those of you who would like to start receiving newsletters, bulletins, program updates or specific program information, you must subscribe now by following these instructions. Just put your email address in the box and click on "Submit." You will then be asked to select the items you would like to receive. A list of "subscription topics" will appear on the screen once you subscribe. At this point, you can "click" on the **plus (+)** next to Mississippi and a list of counties will appear. Choose the county or counties for which you would like to receive FSA updates and news. You can choose as many as you like.

IMPORTANT NOTE: If you "click" the box next to "Mississippi" without expanding your options, you will automatically receive all updates and news for all counties in Mississippi; therefore, make sure you expand your options by clicking on the plus (+) sign and then choose a county or multiple counties.

After selecting your county/counties you can scroll through your other list of news options including information on Farm Loan Programs, Laws & Regulations, Conservation Programs and many more. Each time information pertaining to one of your selected items is published, you will receive an email with a link to the news update.

FSA will continue to mail committee ballots to all eligible producers, as well as correspondence related to a particular producer or farming operation. However, FSA will not be mailing notices of sign-up dates, new or changed programs, or other information of general significance. You may manage your subscriptions and unsubscribe at any time. FSA will enter your subscription if you will fill out form AD-2047 at the county office.

NAP Deadline Approaching for 2016 Crops

Producers are reminded to apply for 2016 Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) benefits by Sept. 1, 2015. The Sept. 1, 2015, deadline includes value loss crops Finfish, Grass for Sod and Christmas Trees. Sept. 30, 2015, is the deadline to apply for 2016 NAP coverage for forage for hay, forage for grazing, oats, onions, Bahia for seed, and wheat.

Eligible producers of eligible crops grown for commercial sale can apply for 2016 NAP coverage at their local FSA Office using form CCC-471, *Application for Coverage*. The service fee for basic NAP coverage is the lesser of \$250 per crop or \$750 per producer per administrative county, not to exceed a total of \$1,875 for a producer with farming interest in multiple counties. Producers interested in buy-up coverage must pay a premium in addition to the service fee. The maximum premium will be \$6,563.

Producers meeting the definition of a socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher, beginning farmer or rancher, or limited resource farmer or rancher will have service fees waived. Producers meeting this definition that choose to purchase buy-up coverage will also have service fees waived and the premium will be capped at \$3,282.

Reporting Organic Crops

Producers who want to use the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) organic price and selected the "organic" option on their NAP application must report their crops as organic.

When certifying organic acres, the buffer zone acreage must be included in the organic acreage.

Producers must also provide a current organic plan, organic certificate or documentation from a certifying agent indicating an organic plan is in effect. Documentation must include:

- name of certified individuals
- address
- telephone number
- effective date of certification
- certificate number
- list of commodities certified
- name and address of certifying agent
- a map showing the specific location of each field of certified organic, including the buffer zone acreage

Certification exemptions are available for producers whose annual gross agricultural income from organic sales totals \$5,000 or less. Although exempt growers are not required to provide a written certificate, they are still required to provide a map showing the specific location of each field of certified organic, transitional and buffer zone acreage.

For questions about reporting organic crops, contact your local FSA office. To find your local office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Producers Must Report Prevented Planting and Failed Acres

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds producers to report prevented planting and failed acres in order to establish or retain FSA program eligibility.

Producers must report crop acreage they intended to plant, but due to natural disaster, were prevented from planting. Prevented planting acreage must be reported on form CCC-576, *Notice of Loss*, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and Risk Management Agency (RMA).

If a producer is unable to report the prevented planting acreage within the 15 calendar days following the final planting date, a late-filed report can be submitted. Late-filed reports will only be accepted if FSA conducts a farm visit to assess the eligible disaster condition that prevented the crop from being planted. A measurement service fee will be charged.

Additionally, producers with failed acres should also use form CCC-576, *Notice of Loss*, to report failed acres.

For losses on crops covered by the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), producers must file a *Notice of Loss* within 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent. Producers must timely file a *Notice of Loss* for failed acres on all crops including grasses.

Please contact your local County FSA Office to schedule an appointment to file a *Notice of Loss*.

ELECTIONS *continued from page 1*

Agricultural producers of legal voting age may be eligible to vote if they participate or cooperate in any FSA program.

COC Election 2015 Dates

Nov. 9, 2015 - Ballots mailed to eligible voters

Dec. 7, 2015 - Last day to return voted ballots to the USDA Service Center

Jan. 1, 2016 - Newly elected county committee members take office

USDA Opens Enrollment Period for Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Safety-Net Programs

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that eligible producers may now formally enroll in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for 2014 and 2015. The enrollment period began June 17, 2015, and will end Sept. 30, 2015.

The new programs, established by the 2014 Farm Bill, trigger financial protections for agricultural producers when market forces cause substantial drops in crop prices or revenues. More than 1.76 million farmers have elected ARC or PLC. Previously, 1.7 million producers had enrolled to receive direct payments (the program replaced with ARC and PLC by the 2014 Farm Bill). This means more farms have elected ARC or PLC than previously enrolled under previously administered programs.

Nationwide, 96 percent of soybean farms, 91 percent of corn farms, and 66 percent of wheat farms elected ARC. 99 percent of long grain rice farms, 99 percent of peanut farms, and 94 percent of medium grain rice farms elected PLC. For data about other crops and state-by-state program election results go to www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.

Covered commodities under ARC and PLC include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium grain rice (which includes short grain and sweet rice), safflower seed, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat. Upland cotton is no longer a covered commodity.

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.

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.

Secretary Hails CRP Program's 30th Anniversary, Announced General Signup Period

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that an additional 800,000 acres of highly environmentally sensitive land may be enrolled in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) under certain wetland and wildlife initiatives that provide multiple benefits on the same land.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will accept new offers to participate in CRP under a general signup to be held Dec. 1, 2015, through Feb. 26, 2016. Eligible existing program participants with contracts expiring Sept. 30, 2015, will be granted an option for one-year extensions. Farmers and ranchers interested in removing sensitive land from agricultural production and planting grasses or trees to reduce soil erosion, improve water quality and restore wildlife habitat are encouraged to enroll.

For 30 years, the Conservation Reserve Program has helped farmers and ranchers prevent more than 8 billion tons of soil from eroding, reduce nitrogen and phosphorous runoff relative to cropland by 95 and 85 percent respectively, and even sequester 43 million tons of greenhouse gases annually, equal to taking 8 million cars off the road.

The voluntary Conservation Reserve Program allows USDA to contract with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive land is conserved. Participants establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat. In return, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years.

CRP protects water quality and restores significant habitat for ducks, pheasants, turkey, quail, deer and other important wildlife which spurs economic development like hunting and fishing, outdoor recreation and tourism across rural America. This announcement allows an additional 800,000 acres for duck nesting habitat and other wetland and wildlife habitat initiatives to be enrolled in the program.

Farmers and ranchers should consider the various CRP continuous sign-up initiatives that may help target specific resource concerns. Financial assistance is offered for many practices including conservation buffers and pollinator habitat plantings, and initiatives such as the highly erodible lands, bottomland hardwood tree and longleaf pine.

ARC, PLC and CTAP Acreage Maintenance

Producers enrolled in Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC), Price Loss Coverage (PLC) or the Cotton Transition Assistance Program (CTAP) 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, PLC or CTAP, the County Committee may elect to terminate the contract for the program year.

Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to eligible producers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to eligible adverse weather and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law.

For 2015, eligible losses must occur on or after Jan. 1, 2015, and before Dec. 31, 2015. A notice of loss must be filed with FSA within 30 days of when the loss of livestock is apparent. Participants must provide the following supporting documentation to their local FSA office no later than 30 calendar days after the end of the calendar year for which benefits are requested:

- Proof of death documentation
- Copy of growers' contracts
- Proof of normal mortality documentation.

USDA has established normal mortality rates for each type and weight range of eligible livestock, i.e. Adult Beef Cow = 1.5% and Non-Adult Beef Cattle (less than 400 pounds) = 5%. These established percentages reflect losses that are considered expected or typical under "normal" conditions. Producers who suffer livestock losses in 2015 must file both of the following:

- A notice of loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss was apparent or by Jan. 30, 2016
- An application for payment by Jan. 30, 2016.

Additional information about LIP is available at your local FSA office or online at: www.fsa.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 for game and bait fish 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, 2014, to Sept. 30, 2015, must file:

Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs) for Crop Years 2015-2018

The Agricultural Act of 2014 authorized 2014-2018 crop year Marketing Assistance Loans and Loan Deficiency Payments.

MALs and LDPs provide financing and marketing assistance for wheat, 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 a loan, but agrees to forgo the loan, may obtain an LDP if such a payment is available. Marketing loan provisions and LDPs are not available for extra-long staple cotton.

FSA is now accepting requests for 2015 MALs and LDPs for wool as well as LDPs for unshorn pelts. MAL and LDP requests for all other eligible commodities will be accepted after harvest. FSA continues to accept MAL and LDP requests for 2014 crops with upcoming deadlines.

Before MAL repayments and LDP disbursements can be made, producers must meet the requirements of actively engaged in farming, cash rent tenant and member contribution.

Additionally, form CCC-902 and CCC-901 must be submitted for the 2014 crop year, if applicable, with a county committee determination and updated subsidiary files.

To be considered eligible for an LDP, producers must have form [CCC-633EZ, Page 1](#) on file at their local FSA Office before losing beneficial interest in the crop. Pages 2, 3 or 4 of the form must be submitted when payment is requested.

The 2014 Farm Bill also establishes payment limitations per individual or entity not to exceed \$125,000 annually on certain commodities for the following program benefits: price loss coverage payments, agriculture risk coverage payments, marketing loan gains (MLGs) and LDPs. These payment limitations do not apply to MAL loan disbursements.

Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) provisions were modified by the 2014 Farm Bill, which states that a producer whose total applicable three-year average AGI exceeds \$900,000 is not eligible to receive an MLG or LDP.

Dairy Indemnity Payment Program

The 2014 Farm Bill authorized the extension of the Dairy Indemnity Payment Program (DIPP) through Sept. 30, 2018. DIPP provides payments to dairy producers and manufacturers of dairy products when they are directed to remove their raw milk or products from the market because of contamination.

Save Time – Make an Appointment with FSA

To insure maximum use of your time and to insure that you are afforded our full attention to your important business needs, please call our office ahead of your visit to set an appointment and to discuss any records or documentation that you may need to have with you when you arrive for your appointment. For local FSA Service Center contact information, please visit: <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>.

ELAP *continued from page 4*

- A notice of loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent or by Nov. 1, 2015
- An application for payment by Nov. 1, 2015.

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.

Agricultural Producers in Mississippi Still Have Time to Apply for Direct Farm Ownership Loan Program

Low-Interest Loans Can Help Producers Start or Expand Farms

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Mississippi Farm Service Agency (FSA) today announced that farmers and ranchers still have time to apply for low interest loans available through the FSA direct farm ownership program. Applications must be approved by Sept. 30, 2015, to take advantage of the funding available.

Eligible farmers and ranchers can borrow up to \$300,000 to buy farmland, construct or repair buildings, pay closing costs, or promote soil and water conservation. The interest rate can be as low as 1.5 percent with up to 40 years to repay.

New farmers and ranchers, military veterans, and underserved farmers and ranchers also are encouraged to apply. Each year Congress targets 80 percent of available loan funds to beginning and targeted underserved farmers and ranchers. Targeted underserved groups include American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians, or other Pacific Islanders, Hispanics and women.

For more information about farm loans, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans, or contact your local FSA office.



Microloans

Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds farmers and ranchers that the FSA borrowing limit for microloans increased from \$35,000 to \$50,000, on Nov. 7, 2014. Microloans offer borrowers simplified lending with less paperwork.

The microloan change allows beginning, small and mid-sized farmers to access an additional \$15,000 in loans using a simplified application process with up to seven years to repay. Microloans are part of USDA's continued commitment to [small and midsized farming operations](#).

To complement the microloan program additional changes to FSA eligibility requirements will enhance beginning farmers and ranchers access to land, a key barrier to entry level producers. FSA policies related to farm experience have changed so that other types of skills may be considered to meet the direct farming experience required for farm ownership loan eligibility. Operation or management of non-farm businesses, leadership positions while serving in the military or advanced education in an agricultural field will now count towards the experience applicants need to show when applying for farm ownership loans. **Important Note:** *Microloans cannot be used to purchase real estate.*

Since 2010, more than 50 percent of USDA's farm loans now go to beginning farmers and FSA has increased its lending to targeted underserved producers by nearly 50 percent.

Please review the FSA [Microloan Program Fact Sheet](#) for program application, eligibility and related information.

Beginning Farmer Loans

FSA assists beginning farmers to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:

- Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years
- Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm
- Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA
- Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's average size farm.

Additional program information, loan applications, and other materials are available at your local USDA Service Center. You may also visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

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.

PRODUCERS *continued on page 6*

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PRESORTED STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

PRODUCERS *continued from page 5*

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.

Guaranteed Loan Program

FSA guaranteed loans allow lenders to provide agricultural credit to farmers who do not meet the lender's normal underwriting criteria. Farmers and ranchers apply for a guaranteed loan through a lender, and the lender arranges for the guarantee. FSA can guarantee up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan. Guaranteed loans can be used for both farm ownership and operating purposes.

Guaranteed farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, construct or repair buildings, develop farmland to promote soil and water conservation or to refinance debt. Guaranteed operating loans can be used to purchase livestock, farm equipment, feed, seed, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance and other operating expenses.

FSA can guarantee farm ownership and operating loans up to \$1,392,000. Repayment terms vary depending on the type of loan, collateral and the producer's ability to repay the loan. Operating loans are normally repaid within seven years and farm ownership loans are not to exceed 40 years. Please contact your lender or local FSA farm loan office for more information on guaranteed loans.

****NOTICE****

The Clarksdale USDA Service Center was temporarily relocated to the Marks USDA Service Center due to renovations.

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