Incentives for Working Grass, Range and Pasture Lands
USDA Extends Dairy Margin Protection Program Deadline
USDA Encourages Producers to Consider Risk Protection Coverage before Fall Crop Sales Deadlines
2016 Acreage Reporting Dates for Mississippi Producers
USDA Packages Disaster Protection with Loans to Benefit Specialty Crop and Diversified Producers
Farm Storage Facility Loans
Farm Service Agency (FSA) Online Hay and Grazing Acres Locator Tool
Microloans for Beginning, Small and Mid-Sized Mississippi Farmers
Direct Loans for Mississippi Farmers and Ranchers
Beginning Farmer Loans

Mississippi FSA October Newsletter

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-
State Executive Director:
Michael R. Sullivan

Next State Committee Meeting:
TBD

Interest Rates:
90-Day Treasury Bill      .125%
Farm Operating Loans
- Direct                      2.625%
Farm Ownership Loans -
Direct                           3.750%
Farm Ownership Loans -
Direct Down Payment,
Beginning
Farmer        1.500%
Emergency Loans        3.625%
Farm Storage Facility
Loan (7 year)             1.875%
Farm Storage Facility
Loan (10 years)         2.125%
Farm Storage Facility
Loan (12 years)         2.375%

COC Election 2015 Dates
Nov. 9 - Ballots mailed to
eligible voters
Dec. 7 - Last day to return
voted ballots to the USDA
Service Center
Jan. 1, 2016 - Newly elected
county committee members
take office

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 or maintain 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. The annual
rental rate for most Mississippi counties is
$15 per acre.

Your local office can provide your county's
rate. Farm Service Agency County Offices
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.

USDA Extends Dairy Margin
Protection Program Deadline

USDA Service Centers will be
closed on Wednesday, Nov. 11
in observance of Veterans Day.
We will re-open for business on
Thursday, Nov. 12.
USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that the deadline to enroll for the dairy Margin Protection Program for coverage in 2016 has been extended until Nov. 20, 2015. The voluntary program, established by the 2014 Farm Bill, provides financial assistance to participating farmers when the margin – the difference between the price of milk and feed costs – falls below the coverage level selected by the farmer.

Producers are encouraged to use the online Web resource at www.fsa.usda.gov/mpptool to calculate the best levels of coverage for their dairy operation. The secure website can be accessed via computer, smartphone or tablet.

Producers who were enrolled in 2015 will need to make a coverage election for 2016 and pay the $100 administration fee. Although any unpaid premium balances for 2015 must be paid in full by the enrollment deadline to remain eligible for higher coverage levels in 2016, premiums for 2016 are not due until Sept. 1, 2016. Also, producers can work with milk marketing companies to remit premiums on their behalf.

To enroll in the Margin Protection Program for Dairy, contact your local FSA county office. To find your local FSA county office, visit http://offices.usda.gov.

Payments under the program may be reduced by a certain percentage due to a sequester order required by Congress and issued pursuant to the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985. Should a payment reduction be necessary, FSA will reduce the payment by the required amount.

USDA Encourages Producers to Consider Risk Protection Coverage before Fall Crop Sales Deadlines

Disaster Assistance is Available for Crops that are Ineligible for Federal Insurance

Farm Service Agency today encouraged producers to examine the available U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) crop risk protection options, including federal crop insurance and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage, before the sales deadline for fall crops.
Deadlines are quickly approaching to purchase coverage for fall-seeded crops. Producers are reminded that crops not covered by insurance may be eligible for the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program. The 2014 Farm Bill expanded NAP to include higher levels of protection. Beginning, underserved and limited resource farmers are now eligible for free catastrophic level coverage, as well as discounted premiums for additional levels of protection."

Federal crop insurance covers crop losses from natural adversities such as drought, hail and excessive moisture. NAP covers losses from natural disasters on crops for which no permanent federal crop insurance program is available, including forage and grazing crops, fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, bioenergy, and industrial crops.

USDA has partnered with Michigan State University and the University of Illinois to create an online tool at www.fsa.usda.gov/nap that allows producers to determine whether their crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP and to explore the best level of protection for their operation. NAP basic coverage is available at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production, with higher levels of coverage, up to 65 percent of their expected production at 100 percent of the average market price, including coverage for organics and crops marketed directly to consumers.

Deadlines for coverage vary by state and crop. To learn more about NAP visit www.fsa.usda.gov/nap or contact your local USDA Service Center. To find your local USDA Service Centers go to http://offices.usda.gov.

Federal crop insurance coverage is sold and delivered solely through private insurance agents. Agent lists are available at all USDA Service Centers or at USDA’s online Agent Locator: http://prodwebnlb.rma.usda.gov/apps/AgentLocator/#. Producers can use the USDA Cost Estimator, https://ewebapp.rma.usda.gov/apps/costestimator/Default.aspx, to predict insurance premium costs.

2016 Acreage Reporting Dates for Mississippi Producers

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

The following acreage reporting dates are applicable for all counties in Mississippi:

December 15, 2015: Fall Seeded Small Grains
January 2, 2016: Honey
January 15, 2016: Blueberries, Grapes, Peaches
March 15, 2016: Pecans
July 15, 2016: all other crops

The following exceptions apply to the above acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the above 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 above acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendars 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 dates listed above or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

**USDA Packages Disaster Protection with Loans to Benefit Specialty Crop and Diversified Producers**

*Free basic coverage and discounted premiums available for new and underserved loan applicants*

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) today announced that producers who apply for FSA farm loans also will be offered the opportunity to enroll in new disaster loss protections created by the 2014 Farm Bill. The new coverage, available from the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), is available to FSA loan applicants who grow non-insurable crops, so this is especially important to fruit and vegetable producers and other specialty crop growers.

New, underserved and limited income specialty growers who apply for farm loans could qualify for basic loss coverage at no cost, or higher coverage for a discounted premium.

The basic disaster coverage protects at 55 percent of the market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of production. Covered crops include “specialty” crops, for instance, vegetables, fruits, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, hay, forage, grazing and energy crops. FSA allows beginning, underserved or limited income producers to obtain NAP coverage up to 90 days after the normal application closing date when they also apply for FSA credit.

In addition to free basic coverage, beginning, underserved or limited income producers are eligible for a 50 percent discount on premiums for the higher levels of coverage that protect up to 65 percent of expected production at 100 percent of the average market price. Producers also may work with FSA to protect value-added production, such as organic or direct market crops, at their fair market value in those markets. Targeted underserved groups eligible for free or discounted coverage are American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, and women.

FSA offers a variety of loan products, including farm ownership loans, operating loans and microloans that have a streamlined application process.

Growers need not apply for an FSA loan, nor be a beginning, limited resource, or underserved farmer, to be eligible for Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program assistance. To learn more, visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/nap](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/nap) or [www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans), or contact your local FSA office at [https://offices.usda.gov](https://offices.usda.gov).

**Farm Storage Facility Loans**

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations require that Federal agencies complete environmental assessments before approving proposed FSFL loans. The assessment is to make certain that the construction of the facility will not jeopardize protected resources such as surface water quality, wetlands, threatened species, and cultural resources. It is critical that the environmental assessment be performed and a determination made that there is no adverse impact.
to protected resources before producers begin any action associated with building the facility for which they wish to obtain a Farm Storage Facility Loan.

Due to these strict NEPA policies, it is important that producers applying for a facility loan remember that no action should be taken to install the facility until after the loan is approved by FSA. After an eligibility decision is made, and if the loan is approved, eligible applicants will be notified in writing after loan approval and given authorization to proceed with construction of the facility. Any actions taken by the applicant prior to loan approval may result in disapproval of the loan.

Contact your local County FSA Office for more information on the FSFL Program.

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**Farm Service Agency (FSA) Online Hay and Grazing Acres Locator Tool**

FSA’s [Hay Net](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/haynet) website is the “go to” online resource for agricultural producers to list information concerning the need for hay and grazing acres or the availability of hay and grazing acres.

If, due to extenuating circumstances, producers are in need of hay and/or grazing acres to support livestock, please use [Hay Net](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/haynet) to post an advertisement seeking these resources. Likewise, landowners who have hay and/or grazing acres available for livestock producers should post a Hay Net advertisement as well.

A few things to remember when using the [Hay Net](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/haynet) website:

- There is a one-time registration process that should be completed by all users who want to post an ad online.
- Users who just want to browse ads DO NOT NEED to have an eAuthentication user id.
- Hay and grazing acre ads will be automatically removed after a period of 13 months.
- Please help your fellow farmer and rancher by keeping ads current and up to date and remove ads you no longer need or want advertised on [Hay Net](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/haynet). Please, no corporate advertisements on this site.

[Hay Net](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/haynet) is brought to you by FSA as a public service. The sole purpose of this online resource is to provide a site for the exchange of information. FSA does not endorse, guarantee, or otherwise make representations of any kind regarding any user of this site and FSA is not responsible for defining the terms of grazing agreements or lease contracts.

For more information about [Hay Net](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/haynet) and other FSA services and programs, please contact your local FSA office. For local FSA Service Center contact information, please visit: [offices.usda.gov](http://www.offices.usda.gov).

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**Microloans for Beginning, Small and Mid-Sized Mississippi Farmers**

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.

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**Direct Loans for Mississippi Farmers and Ranchers**

FSA offers direct farm ownership and direct farm operating Loans to producers who want to establish, maintain or strengthen their farm or ranch. FSA loan officers process, approve and service direct loans.

Direct farm operating loans can be used to purchase livestock and feed, farm equipment, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance and other costs including family living expenses. Operating loans can also be used to finance minor improvements or repairs to buildings and to refinance some farm-related debts, excluding real estate.

Direct farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, enlarge an existing farm, construct and repair buildings, and to make farm improvements.

The maximum loan amount for both direct farm ownership and operating loans is $300,000 and a down payment is not required. 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 local FSA office for more information or to apply for a direct farm ownership or operating loan.

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**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.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. 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).