

May 2017



Farm Service Agency

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NEWSLETTER



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Montana FSA: May 2017 eNewsletter

USDA Farm Service Agency - Montana

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Sonny Perdue Sworn in as 31st U.S. Secretary of Agriculture

Sonny Perdue was sworn in as the 31st U.S. Secretary of Agriculture by fellow Georgian and Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court Clarence Thomas in a brief ceremony on April 25 at the Supreme Court building.

Perdue grew up on a dairy and diversified row crop farm in Bonaire, Georgia. Being uniquely qualified as a former farmer, agribusinessman,

Acting State Executive Director:

Amy Webbink

State Committee:

Steve Carney, Chair
Floyd Dahlman
Kelly Flaherty-Settle
Anita Matt
Patricia Quisno

Reasonable

Accommodations:

People with disabilities who require accommodations to participate in FSA programs and/or events should contact the County Executive Director in the FSA Office in your area or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339. Alternatively, you may contact Montana FSA Civil Rights Coordinator Jennifer Cole at (406) 654.1333, ext. 117 or jennifer.cole@mt.usda.gov.

veterinarian, state legislator and governor of Georgia, he has experienced the agriculture industry from every possible perspective throughout his life.

As secretary, Perdue says he will champion the concerns of farmers, ranchers, foresters and producers, and will work tirelessly to solve the issues facing our farm families.

Perdue's policies as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture will be guided by four principles which will inform his decisions. First, he will maximize the ability of the men and women of America's agriculture and agribusiness sector to create jobs, to produce and sell the foods and fiber that feed and clothe the world, and to reap the earned reward of their labor. Second, he will prioritize customer service every day for American taxpayers and consumers. Third, as Americans expect a safe and secure food supply, USDA will continue to serve in the critical role of ensuring the food we put on the table to feed our families meets the strict safety standards we've established. And fourth, Perdue will always remember that America's agricultural bounty comes directly from the land.

For more information about Secretary Perdue, visit www.usda.gov.

Have you certified your crops? 2017 Acreage Reporting/Crop Certification Deadline: July 17

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

The 2017 Acreage Reporting/Crop Certification Deadline is **July 17, 2017** for Spring Seeded Alfalfa Seed, Forage Seeding, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Fruit (except cherries), Vegetables, Christmas Trees, and all Spring-Seeded Crops and any other crops not required to be reported by previously announced 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.

Policy Updates for Acreage Reporting

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) recently made several policy updates for acreage reporting for cover crops, revising intended use, late-filed provisions, grazing allotments as well as updated the definitions of “idle” and “fallow.”

Reporting Cover Crops:

FSA made changes to the types of cover crops. Cover crop types can be chosen from the following four categories:

- **Cereals and other grasses** - Any cover crop that is classified as a grass plant or cereal grain, and would include, but not be limited to, the following cover crops: cereal rye, wheat, barley, oats, black oats, triticale, annual ryegrass, pearl millet, foxtail millet (also called German, Italian or Hungarian millet), sorghum sudan grass, sorghum and other millets and grasses.
- **Legumes** - Any cover crop that is classified as a legume, including, but not limited to, clovers, vetches, peas, sun hemp, cowpeas, lentils and other legumes.
- **Brassicac and other broadleaves** - Any cover crop that is classified as a non-legume broadleaf, including, but not limited to, Brassicac such as radishes, turnips, canola, rapeseed, oilseed rape, and mustards, as well as other broadleaf plants such as phacelia, flax, sunflower, buckwheat, and safflower.
- **Mixtures** - Mixes of two or more cover crop species planted at the same time, for example, oats and radishes. If the cover crop is harvested for any use other than forage or grazing and is not terminated according to policy guidelines, then that crop will no longer be considered a cover crop and the acreage report must be revised to reflect the actual crop.

Permitted Revision of Intended use After Acreage Reporting Date:

New operators or owners who pick up a farm after the acreage reporting deadline has passed and the crop has already been reported on the farm, have 30 days to change the intended use. Producer share interest changes alone will not allow for revisions to intended use after the acreage reporting date. The revision must be performed by either the acreage reporting date or within 30 calendar days from the date when the new operator or owner acquired the lease on land, control of the land or ownership and new producer crop share interest in the previously reported crop acreage. Under this policy, appropriate documentation must be provided to the County Committee's satisfaction to determine that a legitimate operator or ownership and producer crop share interest change occurred to permit the revision.

Acreage Reports:

In order to maintain program eligibility and benefits, producers must timely file acreage reports. Failure to file an acreage report by the crop acreage reporting deadline may result in ineligibility for future program benefits. FSA will not accept acreage reports provided more than a year after the acreage reporting deadline.

Reporting Grazing Allotments:

FSA offices can now accept acreage reports for grazing allotments. Producers will use form "FSA-578" to report grazing allotments as animal unit months (AUMs) using the "Reporting Unit" field. The local FSA office will need the grazing period start and end date and the percent of public land.

Definitions of Terms

FSA defines "idle" as cropland or a balance of cropland within a Common Land Unit (CLU) (field/subfield) which is not planted or considered not planted and does not meet the definition of fallow or skip row. For example, the balance of a field that could not be planted due to moisture or a turn area that is not planted would be reported as idle.

Fallow is considered unplanted cropland acres which are part of a crop/fallow rotation where cultivated land that is normally planted is purposely kept out of production during a regular growing season. Resting the ground in this manner allows it to recover its fertility and conserve moisture for crop production in the next growing season.

CRP Primary Nesting Season: May 15 to July 15

All Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) maintenance activities, such as mowing, burning, disking and spraying, must be conducted outside the primary nesting season for wildlife, which for Montana is May 15 through July 15. However, spot treatment of the acreage may be allowed during the primary nesting season if, left untreated, the weeds, insects or undesirable species would adversely impact the approved cover. In this instance, spot treatment is limited to the affected areas in the field and requires County Committee approval prior to beginning the spot treatment. The County Committee will consult with NRCS to determine if such activities are needed to maintain the approved cover. Annual mowing of CRP for generic weed control, or for cosmetic purposes, is prohibited at all times.

CRP Managed Haying and Routine Grazing of all CRP contracts must be conducted outside of the primary nesting season and require COC approval prior to beginning the haying and grazing activities.

CRP Grassland Contracts may be grazed during the primary nesting season as long as this activity has been included in the Conservation Plan for that contract. Haying of CRP Grassland contracts must be conducted outside of the primary nesting season.

2017 Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) & Price Loss Coverage (PLC) Enrollment Period Continues: Aug. 1 Deadline

Producers on farms with base acres under the safety net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill, known as the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, can begin visiting FSA county offices to sign contracts and enroll for the 2017 crop year. The enrollment deadline is **Aug. 1, 2017**.

Since shares and ownership of a farm can change year-to-year, producers on the farm must enroll by signing a contract each program year.

If a farm is not enrolled during the 2017 enrollment period, the producers on that farm will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs for the 2017 crop should crop prices or farm

revenues fall below the historical price or revenue benchmarks established by the program. Producers who made their elections in 2015 must still enroll during the 2017 enrollment period.

The ARC and PLC programs were authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill and offer a safety net to agricultural producers when there is a substantial drop in prices or revenues for covered commodities. Covered commodities 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. For more details regarding these programs, go to www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.

For more information, producers are encouraged to visit their local FSA office. To find a local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

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.

Census of Agriculture Countdown Begins for America's Farmers and Ranchers

America's farmers and ranchers will soon have the opportunity to strongly represent agriculture in their communities and industry by taking part in the 2017 Census of Agriculture. Conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the census, to be mailed at the end of this year, is a complete count of all U.S. farms, ranches, and those who operate them.

The Census of Agriculture highlights land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures, and other topics. The 2012 Census of Agriculture revealed that over three million farmers operated more than two million farms, spanning over 914 million acres. This was a four percent decrease in the number of U.S. farms from the previous census in 2007. However, agriculture sales, income, and expenses increased between 2007 and 2012. This telling information and thousands of other agriculture statistics are a direct result of responses to the Census of Agriculture.

Producers who are new to farming or did not receive a Census of Agriculture in 2012 still have time to sign up to receive the 2017 Census of Agriculture report form by visiting www.agcensus.usda.gov and clicking on the 'Make Sure You Are Counted' button through June. NASS defines a farm as any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year (2017).

Report Livestock Losses

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to eligible livestock owners and contract growers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to eligible adverse weather,

disease or attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law. Eligible adverse weather events include but are not limited to floods, blizzards, wildfires, extreme heat, or extreme cold and straight-line wind.

USDA has established normal mortality rates for each type and weight range of eligible livestock, i.e. Adult Beef Cow = 1.00% and Non-Adult Beef Cattle (less than 400 pounds) = 3.60%. These established percentages reflect losses that are considered expected or typical under “normal” conditions.

For 2017, eligible losses must occur on or after Jan. 1, 2017, and no later than 60 calendar days from the ending date of the eligible loss condition. A notice of loss must be filed with FSA within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is first apparent. Participants must file an application for payment and provide all required supporting documentation to their local FSA office no later than 90 calendar days after the end of the calendar year in which the eligible loss condition occurred. Examples of some of the required documentation include;

- Proof of death documentation
- Copy of growers contracts
- Proof of normal mortality documentation
- Livestock beginning and ending inventory documentation

Additional Information about LIP is available at your local FSA office or online at: www.fsa.usda.gov/mt.

2017 Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)

Montana livestock producers, including Honeybee and Farm-raised Fish producers, are reminded that the 2017 Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) program year began Oct. 1, 2016 and continues through Sept. 30, 2017.

Producers who suffer livestock death losses not covered under LIP, or feed losses (must be in the bale or removed from the eligible acreage) and grazing losses not covered under LFP, or losses resulting from the cost of transporting water to livestock due to an eligible drought; colony-collapse disorder, etc, are reminded to report these losses **within 30 calendar days** of when the loss is apparent. In addition to filing a notice of loss, a timely filed acreage report for the 2017 program year must also be submitted with the administrative FSA County Office. For Honeybee producers who suffer losses including colony collapse while in another state, the notice of loss can be filed with the local FSA office in that state.

After producers have timely filed their notice of loss and acreage report, the next step is to make the application for payment. The application for payment and all supporting documentation must be filed with the FSA county office no later than **Nov. 1, 2017**. Since ELAP funds are limited to \$20 million per fiscal year, the National Office must determine if the requested ELAP payments exceed the \$20 million allocation. If the requested 2017 ELAP benefits exceed \$20 million, all payments will be factored.

[ELAP Program Factsheet](#) (pdf)

Emergency Loans – Disaster Designations in Montana

FSA's Emergency Loan Program is available for agricultural producers in counties designated as primary or contiguous natural disaster areas. See map below of current Disaster Designations in Montana by County. Contact your local FSA office for specific designations in your area and time

frames to apply. Eligible producers have **eight months** from the date of the disaster designation to apply for low-interest emergency loans to 1.) restore or replace essential property; 2.) pay all or part of production costs associated with the disaster year; 3.) pay essential family living expenses; or 4.) refinance certain debts, excluding real estate. Producers interested in applying for an emergency loan, or other FLP loans, should contact their local FSA office to set up an appointment with the Farm Loan Program staff serving your area.

[Current Disaster Designations in Montana](#) - (by county)

[Emergency Loan Factsheet](#) (pdf)

Farm Storage Facility Loans

FSA's Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program provides low-interest financing to producers to build or upgrade storage facilities and to purchase portable (new or used) structures, equipment and storage and handling trucks.

The low-interest funds can be used to build or upgrade permanent facilities to store commodities. Eligible commodities include corn, grain sorghum, soybeans, oats, wheat, barley, minor oilseeds harvested as whole grain, pulse crops (lentils, chickpeas and dry peas), hay, honey, renewable biomass, fruits, nuts and vegetables for cold storage facilities, floriculture, hops, rye, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, meat and poultry (unprocessed), eggs, and aquaculture (excluding systems that maintain live animals through uptake and discharge of water). Qualified facilities include grain bins, hay barns and cold storage facilities for eligible commodities.

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 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 the FSA Farm Storage Facility Loan, contact your local FSA county office.

Organic Certification Cost Share Program

The Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP) provides cost share assistance to producers and handlers of agricultural products who are obtaining or renewing their certification under the National Organic Program (NOP). Certified operations may receive up to 75 percent of their certification costs paid from Oct. 1, 2016, through Sept. 30, 2017, not to exceed \$750 per certification scope.

Eligible costs include application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement/arrangement requirements, travel/per diem for inspectors, user fees, sales assessments and postage.

Ineligible costs include equipment, materials, supplies, transitional certification fees, late fees and inspections necessary to address National Organic Program regulatory violations.

Producers and handlers may submit OCCSP applications to FSA county offices or they may apply through participating State Agencies, which will be listed at <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/occsp/index> as their agreements to administer the program are finalized.

The FSA OCCSP application form is available at [USDA's eForms site](#), by selecting "Browse forms" and entering "OCCSP" in the "title or keywords" field on the search page.

To learn more about organic certification cost share, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/organic or contact a local FSA office by visiting <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Risk Management Agency (RMA) to Prevent Fraud, Waste, and Abuse

FSA supports RMA in the prevention of fraud, waste and abuse of the Federal Crop Insurance Program. FSA has been, and will continue to, assist RMA and insurance providers by monitoring crop conditions throughout the growing season. FSA will continue to refer all suspected cases of fraud, waste and abuse directly to RMA. Producers can report suspected cases to the county office staff, the RMA office, or the Office of the Inspector General.

Upcoming Farm Service Agency Dates and Deadlines

- **May 14:** 2017 CRP Spring Grazing Period Ends
- **May 15 to July 15:** Montana Primary Nesting Season
- **May 31:** Final availability date for Loans and LDPs for Corn, Dry Peas, Grain Sorghum, Lentils, Mustard Seed, Rice, Safflower Seed, Chickpeas, Soybeans and Sunflower Seed
- **June 15:** 2017 FSA County Committee Election Nomination Period Begins
- **July 15:** Last day of Montana Primary Nesting Season
- **July 16:** 2017 CRP Summer/Fall Grazing Period Begins (with prior written approval)
- **July 16:** 2017 CRP Managed Harvesting Period Begins (with prior written approval)
- **July 17:** 2017 Acreage Reporting Deadline for Spring Seeded Alfalfa Seed, Forage Seeding, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Fruit (except cherries), Vegetables, Christmas Trees, all Spring-Seeded Crops and all other crops not required to be reported by previously announced deadlines
- **July 17:** 2016 NAP Production Reporting Deadline for certain NAP crops
- **July 17:** Deadline to submit 2016 Certified Yields for ARC-IC
- **Aug. 1:** Deadline for 2017 Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) & Price Loss Coverage (PLC) Enrollment
- **Aug. 1:** 2017 FSA County Committee Election Nomination Period Deadline
- **Aug. 1:** Last day to request FY 2017 farm reconstitutions on ARC & PLC farms
- **Aug. 1:** Last day to request farm transfers for FY 2017
- **Sept. 1:** 2018 NAP Application Closing Date Value-Loss Crops such as nursery, Christmas trees, grass sod, ginseng, aquaculture, floriculture, root stock sets and mushrooms.
- **Sept. 13:** 2017 CRP Summer/Fall Grazing Period Ends
- **Sept. 30:** 2017 CRP Managed Harvesting Period Ends
- **Oct. 2:** 2018 NAP Application Closing Date for Annual Fall-Seeded Crops, Perennial Forage and Grazing, Mixed Forage Crops including spring seeded annual types of mixed forage, Rye, Speltz, Triticale, Wheat and Garlic

- **Nov. 15:** 2018 Acreage Reporting Deadline for Apiculture, Perennial Forage, Pasture, Rangeland, Forage (PRF) including native grass, fall wheat (Hard Red Winter), and all other fall-seeded small grains
- **Nov. 15:** Final 2017 Acreage Reporting Deadline for Apiculture, Perennial Forage, Pasture, Rangeland, Forage (PRF) including native grass, fall wheat (Hard Red Winter), and all other fall-seeded small grains

Montana USDA Office Directories and Websites

Directories:

- [Online Directory of FSA Offices in Montana](#)
- [PDF of Montana FSA Directory](#)
- [PDF of Montana USDA Directory](#)

Online Resource Links:

- [FSA Factsheets Website](#)
- [FSA Disaster Programs](#)
- [FSA Farm Loan Programs](#)
- [FSA Conservation Programs](#)
- [FSA Price Support Programs](#)
- [FSA ARC-PLC Programs](#)
- [FSA Organic Certification Cost-Share Program](#)
- [FSA Energy Programs](#)

FSA Policy Reminders:

- [2017 Annual Notification-pdf](#)

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