

October 2017



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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USDA Farm Service Agency - Montana

P.O. Box 670
Bozeman, MT 59771

Phone: 406.587.6872

Fax: 855.546.0264

Web: www.fsa.usda.gov/mt

Acting State Executive Director:

Amy Webbink

State Committee:

Steve Carney, Chair

Floyd Dahlman

Kelly Flaherty-Settle

Anita Matt

Patricia Quisno

Directories:

USDA Issues Farm Safety Net and Conservation Payments

USDA Farm Service Agency announced that over \$9.6 billion in payments will be made to producers through the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC), Price Loss Coverage (PLC) and Conservation Reserve (CRP) programs. The USDA is issuing approximately \$8 billion in payments under the ARC and PLC programs for the 2016 crop year, and \$1.6 billion under CRP for 2017.

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 revenue or prices for covered commodities. Over half a million producers will receive ARC payments and over a quarter million producers will receive PLC payments for 2016 crops, starting the first week of October and continuing over the next several months.

Payments are being made to producers who enrolled base acres of barley, corn, grain sorghum, lentils, oats, peanuts, dry peas,

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

Online Resource Links:

- [FSA Factsheets](#)
- [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](#)
- [USDA:](#)
<https://www.usda.gov/>
- [New Farmers:](#)
<https://newfarmers.usda.gov/>
- [Montana Department of Agriculture's Hay Hotline](#)

FSA Policy Reminders:

[2017 Annual Notification](#) (pdf)

soybeans, wheat and canola. In the upcoming months, payments will be announced after marketing year average prices are published by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service for the remaining covered commodities. Those include long and medium grain rice (except for temperate Japonica rice), which will be announced in November; remaining oilseeds and chickpeas, which will be announced in December; and temperate Japonica rice, which will be announced in early February 2017. The estimated payments are before application of sequestration and other reductions and limits, including adjusted gross income limits and payment limitations.

Also, as part of an ongoing effort to protect sensitive lands and improve water quality and wildlife habitat, USDA will begin issuing 2017 CRP payments in October to over 375,000 Americans.

Signed into law by President Reagan in 1985, CRP is one of the largest private-lands conservation program in the United States. Thanks to voluntary participation by farmers and landowners, CRP has improved water quality, reduced soil erosion and increased habitat for endangered and threatened species. In return for enrolling in CRP, USDA, through the Farm Service Agency (FSA) on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation, provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Participants enter into contracts that last between 10 and 15 years. CRP payments are made to participants who remove sensitive lands from production and plant certain grasses, shrubs and trees that improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and increase wildlife habitat.

For more details regarding ARC and PLC programs, go to www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc. For more information about CRP, contact your local FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov/crp.

FSA Program Eligibility Requirement - 2018 Acreage Reporting/Crop Certification Deadline: Nov. 15, 2017

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 2018 Acreage Reporting/Crop Certification Deadline is **Nov. 15, 2017** for Apiculture, Perennial Forage, Pasture, Rangeland, Forage (PRF) including native grass, fall wheat (Hard Red Winter) and all other fall-seeded small grains. These crops must be reported to FSA by Nov. 15, 2017 to be considered timely filed in order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements.

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 "green manure," "left standing," or "seed," then the acreage must be reported by July 17th. 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.

Important reminder: A “Final” crop reporting date was established which is the crop’s subsequent year’s acreage reporting date (ARD). If a crop report is not submitted by the subsequent year’s ARD, or “Final” ARD, the acreage report cannot be considered acceptable and producers will not receive planting credit for the crop nor will the crop be eligible for any FSA program benefits for the applicable program year. The first “Final” ARD is **November 15, 2017** for 2017 crops that were required to be reported by November 15, 2016. Producers that do not report their 2017 perennial forage crops, including native grass, by November 15, 2017, will not be eligible for the 2017 LFP or ELAP program

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.
- **Brassicas and other broadleaves** - Any cover crop that is classified as a non-legume broadleaf, including, but not limited to, Brassicas 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.

Note: 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 and intended use.

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 calendar 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 now have the ability to load grazing allotments as animal unit months (AUMs) using the "Reporting Unit" field in the FSA-578, "Report of Acreage". In addition to the AUMs, the local FSA office will need the grazing period start and end date and the percent of public land. Producers will be required to provide this information on their compliance maps.

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.

2017 Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP): Nov. 1st Deadline

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. **Important note:** 2017 acreage reports are required to be filed for all eligible land no later than the final reporting date of **Nov. 15, 2017**. Acreage reports filed after that date will not be accepted which will result in ineligibility for the 2017 ELAP program.

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, 2016 to Sept. 30, 2017 must file:

- A notice of loss the **earlier** of 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent or by Nov. 1, 2017
- An application for payment by **Nov. 1, 2017**

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.

Livestock Forage Disaster Program Available in 42 Montana Counties

FSA's Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) provides compensation to eligible livestock producers who suffer grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land, or fire on federally managed land.

Livestock producers in 42 Montana counties are eligible to apply for 2017 LFP benefits on small grain, native pasture, improved pasture, annual ryegrass and forage sorghum that is produced on dryland acres and used for grazing. Irrigated acres used for grazing or aftermath grazing are not eligible under this program. Eligible livestock include alpacas, beef cattle, buffalo, beefalo, dairy cattle, deer, elk, emus, equine, goats, llamas, reindeer or sheep that have been or would have been grazing the eligible grazing land or pastureland during the normal grazing period.

County committees can only accept LFP applications after notification is received by the National Office of a qualifying drought or if a federal agency prohibits producers from grazing normal permitted livestock on federally managed lands due to qualifying fire.

As of **Oct. 5, 2017**, the following **42 Montana counties** met the drought criteria on the U.S. Drought Monitor and are eligible for the 2017 LFP Program: **Big Horn, Blaine, Broadwater, Carter, Cascade, Chouteau, Custer, Daniels, Dawson, Fallon, Fergus, Flathead, Garfield, Glacier, Golden Valley, Hill, Jefferson, Judith Basin, Lake, Lewis and Clark, Liberty, Lincoln, McCone, Meagher, Musselshell, Petroleum, Phillips, Pondera, Powder River, Prairie, Richland, Roosevelt, Rosebud, Sanders, Sheridan, Teton, Toole, Treasure, Valley, Wheatland, Wibaux and Yellowstone.**

- 1 monthly LFP payment: Big Horn, Flathead, Lake, Lincoln and Sanders
- 3 monthly LFP payments: Broadwater, Jefferson, Lewis and Clark and Pondera
- 4 monthly LFP payments: Carter, Cascade, Chouteau, Dawson, Fallon, Glacier, Golden Valley, Judith Basin, Liberty, Meagher, Musselshell, Powder River, Richland, Teton, Toole, Treasure, Wheatland, Wibaux and Yellowstone
- 5 monthly LFP payments: Blaine, Custer, Daniels, Fergus, Garfield, Hill, McCone, Petroleum, Phillips, Prairie, Roosevelt, Rosebud, Sheridan and Valley.

Producers with grazing land physically located in one of the 42 eligible LFP counties should contact their local FSA office to schedule an appointment to begin the application process.

Eligible livestock producers must complete a CCC-853 and the required supporting documentation no later than Jan. 30, 2018, for 2017 losses. Note that 2017 acreage reports are required to be filed for all eligible land no later than the final reporting date of **Nov. 15, 2017**. Acreage reports filed after that date will not be accepted which will result in ineligibility for the 2017 LFP program. Required supporting documents may include information related to grazing leases or federal grazing permits, contract grower agreements, documentation to support livestock inventory and more.

Additional Information about LFP, including eligible livestock and fire criteria, is available at your local FSA office or online at www.fsa.usda.gov.

Emergency Loan Program Available: Montana Disaster Designations

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. 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)

Environmental Review Required for Certain FSA Programs

Producers applying for projects involving federal funding including, but not limited to, Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFL) and Farm Loan Programs (FLP), are reminded that an environmental review must be completed before any work begins. Any site preparation or ground disturbance prior to completion of the review could result in denial of funding. Please contact your local office early in the planning process.

Farm Service Agency 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.

Youth loans can finance many kinds of income-producing agricultural projects. The loan funds may be used to: Buy livestock, seed, equipment and supplies; Buy, rent or repair needed tools and equipment; and Pay operating expenses for the project.

Stop by the FSA office for help preparing and processing the application forms. For online information, please visit: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/index>.

Dairy Producers Can Enroll for 2018 Coverage

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that starting Sept. 1, 2017, dairy producers can enroll for 2018 coverage in the Margin Protection Program (MPP-Dairy). Secretary Sonny Perdue has utilized additional flexibility this year by providing dairy producers the option of opting out of the program for 2018.

To opt out, a producer should not sign up during the annual registration period. By opting out, a producer would not receive any MPP-Dairy benefits if payments are triggered for 2018. Full details will be included in a subsequent Federal Register Notice. The decision would be for 2018 only and is not retroactive.

The voluntary program, established by the 2014 Farm Bill, provides financial assistance to participating dairy producers when the margin – the difference between the price of milk and feed costs – falls below the coverage level selected by the producer.

MPP-Dairy gives participating dairy producers the flexibility to select coverage levels best suited for their operation. Enrollment ends on Dec. 15, 2017, for coverage in calendar year 2018. Participating farmers will

remain in the program through Dec. 31, 2018, and pay a minimum \$100 administrative fee for 2018 coverage. Producers have the option of selecting a different coverage level from the previous coverage year during open enrollment.

Dairy operations enrolling in the program must meet conservation compliance provisions and cannot participate in the Livestock Gross Margin Dairy Insurance Program. Producers can mail the appropriate form to the producer's administrative county FSA office, along with applicable fees, without necessitating a trip to the local FSA office. If electing higher coverage for 2018, dairy producers can either pay the premium in full at the time of enrollment or pay 100 percent of the premium by Sept. 1, 2018. Premium fees may be paid directly to FSA or producers can work with their milk handlers to remit premiums on their behalf.

USDA has a web tool to help producers determine the level of coverage under the MPP-Dairy that will provide them with the strongest safety net under a variety of conditions. The online resource, available at www.fsa.usda.gov/mpptool, allows dairy farmers to quickly and easily combine unique operation data and other key variables to calculate their coverage needs based on price projections. Producers can also review historical data or estimate future coverage based on data projections. The secure site can be accessed via computer, Smartphone, tablet or any other platform, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

For more information, visit FSA online at www.fsa.usda.gov/dairy or stop by a local FSA office to learn more about the MPP-Dairy.

FSAfarm+, FSA's Customer Self-Service Portal

FSA has launched a new tool to provide farmers and ranchers with remote access to their personal farm information using their home computers. Farmers and ranchers can now view, print or export their personal farm data all without visiting an FSA county office.

The program, known as **FSAfarm+**, provides you with secure access to view your personal FSA data, such as base and yields, Conservation Reserve Program data, other conservation program acreage, Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation status information, field boundaries, farm imagery, name and address details, contact information and membership interest and shares in the operation. This data will be available in real time, at no cost to the producer and allow operators and owners to export and print farm records, including maps. Producers also can electronically share their data with a crop insurance agent from their own personal computer.

Farm operators and owners first will need "Level 2 eAuthentication" to access the webportal. This level of security ensures that personal information is protected for each user. Level 2 access can be obtained by going to www.eauth.usda.gov, completing the required information and then visiting your local FSA office to finalize access.

For more information on **FSAfarm+**, the customer self-service portal, contact your local FSA office. To find your local FSA county office, click <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Montana FSA Program Dates and Deadlines

Oct. 31: Deadline to sign up for the 2017 Organic Certification Cost-Share Program

Nov. 1: All Hay Bales Must be Removed from Emergency CRP (State Committee Extended Deadline)

Nov. 1: 2017 Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees & Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) Application for Payment Deadline

Nov. 1: Signup Begins for 2018 Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC)

Nov. 6: County Committee Election Ballots will be mailed to Eligible Voters

Nov. 12: All Hay Bales Must be Removed from Managed CRP

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

Dec. 1: 2018 NAP Application Closing Date for Honey Producers

Dec. 4: Last Day to Return Voted County Committee Election Ballots to local FSA Offices

Dec. 15: Last day of 2018 MPP-Dairy Signup

Jan. 1, 2018: Newly elected FSA County Committee Members Take Office

Jan. 2, 2018: 2018 Acreage Reporting Deadline for Honey covered under NAP (or 30 days after placement of colonies.) **Please note that this is the Final Acreage Reporting Deadline for 2017 Honey covered under NAP.**

Jan. 15, 2018: 2018 Acreage Reporting Deadline for Established Stand Alfalfa Seed, Fall Alfalfa Seed and Cherries. **Please note that this is the Final Acreage Reporting Deadline for 2017 Established Stand Alfalfa Seed, Fall Alfalfa Seed and Cherries.**

Jan. 30, 2018: Deadline for 2017 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) Application for Payment and Supporting Documentation

Jan. 30, 2018: Deadline for 2017 Tree Assistance Program (TAP) Application for Payment and Supporting Documentation for Loss of 2017 (or 90 days after disaster event or loss was apparent.)

Feb. 1, 2018: Final Availability Date for Loans and Loan Deficiency Payment (LDP) for Mohair, Unshorn Pelts (LDP only) and Wool

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