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- [Spring Crop Certification Underway; Other Upcoming FSA Program Deadlines](#)
- [Farm Loan Program Availability](#)
- [Filing for NAP Losses](#)
- [ARC-PLC: Enrollment Period for 2016 USDA Safety Net Coverage Continues; Aug. 1st Deadline](#)
- [Changing Administrative Counties](#)
- [Change in Farming Operation](#)
- [Continuous Conservation Reserve Program](#)
- [2016 Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#)
- [Ag News from USDA Rural Development - July 1st Deadline to Apply for Value-Added Producer Grant](#)
- [NRCS Sets Program Funding Application Cutoff for June 1](#)

Montana FSA: April 2016 eNewsletter

USDA Farm Service Agency - Montana

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Spring Crop Certification Underway; Other Upcoming FSA Program Deadlines

- **May 14:** 2016 CRP Spring Managed and Routine Grazing Period Ends
- **May 15 to July 15:** 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
- **July 15:** 2016 Acreage Reporting/Crop Certification Deadline 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.
- **July 15:** Final 2015 NAP Final Production Reports are due for certain NAP crops
- **July 15:** The nomination period begins for County Committee Elections across Montana.

USDA Office Directories:

[Online Directory of FSA Offices](#)

[PDF of Montana FSA Directory](#)

[PDF of Montana USDA Directory](#)

- **July 16:** CRP 2016 Summer/Fall Managed Harvesting and Routine Grazing Begins (with prior County Committee Approval of Request)
- **Aug. 1:** Deadline for 2016 ARC and PLC Enrollment
- **Aug. 1:** Deadline to request farm transfers for FY' 2016
- **Aug. 1:** Last day to file nomination forms at the local USDA Service center

For more information about FSA programs, contact your local FSA office.

Reasonable

Accommodations: People with disabilities who require accommodations to participate in FSA programs 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 also contact Montana FSA Civil Rights Coordinator Jennifer Cole at (406) 587-6786 or jennifer.cole@mt.usda.gov.

Farm Loan Program Availability

FSA has a number of loan programs available to assist applicants to begin or continue in agricultural production. As a farmer or rancher, whether you are just starting out or have many years of experience, loans are available for farm operating purposes and/or to purchase or improve a farm or ranch. All qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs. As the "Lender of First Opportunity" FSA targets some of the direct and guaranteed loan funds for beginning and/or underserved farmers or ranchers. For purposes of this program, a beginning farmer/rancher is defined as someone who started in farming or ranching less than 10 years ago; underserved individuals 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. For more information, contact your local FSA office who can schedule an appointment with the Farm Loan Program (FLP) staff serving your area and/or visit the [National FLP Web site](#).

[FSA Factsheet: Farm Loan Program Overview](#) (pdf)

Filing for NAP Losses

The CCC-576, Notice of Loss, documents a producer's loss or damage to a crop or commodity due to an eligible cause of loss, as well as failed acreage and prevented planting. A CCC-576, Notice of Loss must be provided for prevented planting claims, within 15 calendar days after the final planting date established for the crop, and for low yield claims, the earlier of:

- 15 calendar days after the disaster occurrence or date of loss or damage to the crop first becomes apparent
- 15 calendar days after the normal harvest date established for 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) and crop insurance, you must file a CCC-576, Notice of Loss, in the FSA County Office by the dates previously mentioned.

A Montana NAP factsheet is available electronically [HERE](#).

ARC-PLC: Enrollment Period for 2016 USDA Safety Net Coverage Continues; Aug. 1st Deadline

FSA has announced that **August 1, 2016** is the deadline for producers to complete the annual enrollment process for the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs.

Producers previously made a program election of ARC or PLC for their eligible farms; the program election remains in effect through 2018. However, producers must still enroll their farm by signing a contract each year to be eligible for potential payments.

Producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office to schedule an appointment to enroll. If a farm is not enrolled during the 2016 enrollment period, producers on that farm will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs should crop prices or farm revenues fall below the historical price or revenue benchmarks established by the program.

The two 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>.

Changing Administrative Counties

Producers who wish to transfer their farm records to a different administrative county for Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 must file a request no later than August 1, 2016. Restrictions do apply when transferring to an office other than the county in which the land is physically located. Contact your local FSA office for more information.

Change in Farming Operation

If you have bought or sold land, or if you have picked up or dropped rented land from your operation, make sure you report the changes to your local FSA office as soon as possible. When making ownership changes please provide a copy of the land deed or recorded land contract for purchased

property. A reminder that the failure to maintain accurate farm records with FSA on all land you have an interest in can cause potential loss of program eligibility.

Continuous Conservation Reserve Program

FSA County Offices are taking offers for various Continuous CRP practices at this time. Under the continuous signup, environmentally sensitive land devoted to certain conservation practices such as: shelterbelts, grassed waterways, riparian and wetland buffers, and salt tolerant vegetation may be enrolled in CRP at any time. Offers are automatically accepted provided the land and producer meet certain eligibility requirements.

Under a Continuous CRP signup, the effective start date of the contract can be delayed by up to 6 months. Therefore, if a Continuous CRP contract were to start on April 1, the producer could delay the start date to October 1st. However, under this delayed start date provision, no growing crops can be on the land that is to be enrolled in CRP on the date the contract becomes effective. There are no exceptions to this provision.

Also, since the effective start date can be delayed up to 6 months, producers with CRP contracts expiring on September 30, 2016, can now submit offers to re-enroll existing CRP acreage under Continuous CRP signup #48. Eligibility for re-enrollment will depend on location for certain practices.

For more information visit the national CRP page at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/crp> and Montana FSA online at www.fsa.usda.gov/mt.

2016 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 2016 Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) program year began Oct. 1, 2015 and continues through Sept. 30, 2016.

Producers who suffer livestock losses not covered under LIP, or losses of eligible stored feed stocks, 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 2016 program year must also be submitted with the administrative FSA county office. For Honeybee producers who have become aware of 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. This step must be completed no later than Nov. 1, 2016. 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 2016 ELAP benefits exceed \$20 million, all payments will be factored.

[ELAP Livestock Assistance Factsheet](#) - August 2015

[ELAP - ELAP Honeybees Assistance Factsheet](#) - August 2015

[ELAP - ELAP Farm-Raised Fish Assistance Factsheet](#) - August 2015

Ag News from USDA Rural Development - July 1st Deadline to Apply for Value-Added Producer Grant

USDA Rural Development is accepting applications for the Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program.

The VAPG program helps independent producers and agricultural producer groups, farmer-or-rancher-cooperatives, and majority-controlled producer-based business ventures enter into value-added activities related to the processing and/or marketing of bio-based value-added products. Generating new products, creating and expanding marketing opportunities, and increasing producer income are the goals of this program.

Value-added processing and marketing helps farmers and ranchers receive a higher portion of the retail dollar. Value-Added Producer Grants support planning activities, such as developing a business plan, as well as working capital.

Grants are awarded through a national competition. The maximum grant amount for planning grants is \$75,000 and \$250,000 for working capital grants. Matching resources are required.

The deadline to submit paper applications is July 1, 2016.

For more information contact the Rural Development office at 406-585-2540 or www.rd.usda.gov/mt.

NRCS Sets Program Funding Application Cutoff for June 1

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has set a June 1, 2016, application cutoff for agricultural operators to be considered for 2017 conservation program funding through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

NRCS provides funding and technical assistance to help farmers and ranchers implement conservation practices that provide environmental benefits to help sustain agricultural operations. Conservation program participation is voluntary and helps private landowners and operators defray the costs of installing conservation practices.

NRCS accepts conservation program applications year-round; however, applications for 2017 funding consideration must be submitted by June 1, 2016. Applications made after the June 1 cutoff will be considered in the next funding cycle. Additional information is available on the Montana NRCS website at www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov under the Programs tab or you can contact your local NRCS service center.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).