



NEWSLETTER



March 2015

Nebraska Farm Service Agency

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Lincoln, NE 68510

www.fsa.usda.gov/ne

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Please contact your local FSA Office for questions specific to your operation or county

Nebraska FSA Update

USDA Provides One-Time Extension of Deadline to Update Base Acres or Yield History for ARC/PLC

Landowners have until March 31 to Update Yields and Reallocate Base Acres; Deadline for Choosing between ARC and PLC also Remains March 31

Producers and land owners are reminded that the final day to update yield history or reallocate base acres has been extended one additional month, from Feb. 27, 2015 to March 31, 2015. The final day for farm owners and producers to choose Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) also remains March 31, 2015.

If no changes are made to yield history or base acres by March 31, 2015, the farm's current yield and base will be used. A program choice of ARC or PLC coverage also must be made by March 31, 2015, or there will be no 2014 payments for the farm and the farm will default to PLC coverage through the 2018 crop year.

Contact your local FSA office now to schedule an appointment if you do not already have one. If you have previously initiated this process, ensure all paperwork and necessary signatures are back by the deadline. These are important "one-time" opportunities. Contact your local FSA office for additional information.

USDA Reminds Farmers of 2014 Farm Bill Conservation Compliance Changes

The 2014 Farm Bill implements a change in the requirements for having a Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation Certification (AD-1026) on file.

For farmers to be eligible for premium support on their federal crop insurance, a completed and signed AD-1026 certification form must be on file with the FSA. The Risk Management Agency (RMA), through the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC), manages the federal crop insurance program that provides the modern farm safety net for American farmers and ranchers.

Many FSA and Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) programs already have implemented this requirement and therefore most producers should already have an AD-1026 form on file for their associated lands.

USDA Reminds Farmers of Conservation Compliance *Cont.*

However, if a producer is a crop insurance participant who does not currently have an AD-1026 on file with FSA, one must be filed by June 1, 2015 to maintain eligibility for a crop insurance premium subsidy.

Additionally, producers should file an AD-1026 form prior to doing any land development, sod busting, drainage, tree removal, manipulation etc. and are reminded to consult with FSA and NRCS before completing such activities. Moving forward with bringing land into production or completing other activities such as tiling or manipulating drainage without prior authorization may put a producer's federal farm program benefits in jeopardy.

The 2014 Farm Bill also provides Native Sod Provisions applicable to the states of Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Native sod provisions reduce crop insurance benefits on land sod busted after February 7, 2014 that has no history of prior tillage. In addition, the premium subsidy for native sod acres is decreased. Similar application of Native Sod Provisions also applies to FSA's Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), under which the coverage benefit is reduced and the service fee is increased when Native Sod Provisions apply.

USDA Conducts Sorghum Referendum

The US Department of Agriculture has announced a referendum regarding continuation of the Sorghum Checkoff Program. For the program to continue, a majority of those voting must favor continuation of the checkoff program. The referendum will be conducted beginning March 23, 2015, through April 21, 2015, at your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices for sorghum producers and at the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) office for importers. Beginning March 23, 2015, ballots may be obtained in person, by mail, or facsimile at County FSA offices or online at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/LSMarketingPrograms>.

Eligibility to participate in the referendum is based on the production and sale or importation of sorghum during the period from January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2014. Individuals are required to provide documentation such as a sales receipt or a remittance form showing they engaged in the production or importation of sorghum during this time period. Contact your local FSA office for additional information about the referendum.

Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP)

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) program is a voluntary program that allows agricultural producers the opportunity to enroll their environmentally sensitive land for 10 to 15 years by planting species that will improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and enhance wildlife habitat.

Dates to Remember

March 23, 2015 through April 21, 2015 -

Sorghum Checkoff Program referendum voting period for sorghum producers.

March 31, 2015 -

Deadline for base reallocation, yield update, and ARC or PLC election for 2014 through 2018 crop years; Deadline to obtain MAL's and LDP's for Barley, Canola, Crambe, Flaxseed, Honey, Oats, Rapeseed, Wheat, and Sesame Seed.

June 1, 2015 – Deadline to obtain MAL's and LDP's for Corn, Dry Peas, Grain Sorghum, Lentils, Mustard Seed, Safflower Seed, Chickpeas, Soybeans, and Sunflower Seed.

July 15, 2015 - Deadline to report all spring-seeded crops, including Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage.

Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP) offers can be submitted at any time under certain conservation practices and will receive an annual rental rate payment based on the three predominant soils and are automatically accepted provided the land and producer meet all the eligibility requirements. To be eligible for CRP, land must be planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity four out of the previous six years 2008 to 2013 and is physically and legally capable of being planted to an agricultural commodity.

All CRP contracts are entitled to cost share assistance and possible incentives for certain continuous signup practices including a signing incentive payment (SIP) up to \$150 per acre, and a practice incentive payment (PIP) equal to 40 percent of the eligible costs.

Soil Rental Rates (SRR) for dryland cropland provide the basis for maximum payment rate calculations used to determine annual rental payments for CRP cropland offers and contracts.

FSA is in the process of reviewing SRR's which may result in a rate increase in your rental rate when enrolling land in the CCRP.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Mid-Contract Management Requirements

All CRP participants are required to perform at least 1 management activity as part of their approved conservation plan. The management activity is for the purpose of improving plant diversity and wildlife habitat while ensuring protection of the soil and water resources. Management activities must be completed a minimum of one time during a 10 year contract and a minimum of two management activities for contracts enrolled longer than 10 years.

Producers should take a look at their CRP conservation plan to determine when the management activity is required. Management activities cannot be completed during the primary nesting season of May 1 through July 15. Before May 1 is a great opportunity to complete your CRP management activity.

USDA Creates More Bird Habitat Opportunities on Irrigated Farmland

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) announces more bird habitats to be established in irrigated farmland regions through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

Declines in upland bird populations, such as the northern bobwhite, pheasant, and prairie chicken, led to the creation of new Conservation Reserve Program features to help restore habitats for these species in these agricultural areas. Since the program's creation in 2004, more than 240,000 acres of marginal cropland has been converted to native grasslands, spurring an increase in upland bird populations. Other species that can benefit from today's change include the mourning dove, wild turkey, several sparrows, meadowlark (the Nebraska state bird), and bobolinks.

In recent years, however, applications for this type of habitat creation have slowed. To encourage more participation, USDA's new policy focuses on farmland with center-pivot irrigation systems where there are circular areas of cropland with patches of land beyond the reach of irrigation. Until now, these patches – known as pivot corners – were only eligible for habitat creation when connected by a linear strip of grassland also enrolled in the program. The new policy allows producers interested in habitat creation to use disconnected pivot corners to help increase the population of upland birds.

The Conservation Reserve Program is a voluntary program. FSA contracts with agricultural landowners so that environmentally sensitive land is not farmed but instead used for conservation. Participants establish long-term plant species that control soil erosion, sequester carbon, improve water quality, and strengthen declining wildlife populations. In return, participants receive annual rental payments between 10 and 15 years.

Interested landowners can enroll pivot corners in the Conservation Reserve Program at any time. Participants and land must meet certain eligibility requirements. Other restrictions may apply. For additional details, contact your local Farm Service Agency office at offices.usda.gov or visit the website at www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation.

USDA Announces New Support for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

Department Implementing New Farm Bill Programs, Unveiling New Centralized Online Resource to Support Next Generation of Farmers

USDA has announced the implementation of new Farm Bill measures and other policy changes to improve the financial security of new and beginning farmers and ranchers. USDA also unveiled www.USDA.gov/newfarmers, a new website that will provide a centralized, one-stop resource where beginning farmers and ranchers can explore the variety of USDA initiatives designed to help them succeed.

USDA's www.usda.gov/newfarmers has in depth information for new farmers and ranchers, including: how to increase access to land and capital; build new market opportunities; participate in conservation opportunities; select and use the right risk management tools; and access USDA education, and technical support programs. These issues have been identified as top priorities by new farmers. The website will also feature instructive case studies about beginning farmers who have successfully utilized USDA resources to start or expand their business operations.

These policy announcements in support of beginning farmers and ranchers include:

- Waiving service fees for new and beginning farmers or ranchers to enroll in the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) for the 2014 crop year. NAP provides risk management tools to farmers who grow crops for which there is no crop insurance product. Under this waiver, announced via an [official notice](#) to Farm Service Agency offices, farmers and ranchers whom already enrolled in NAP for the 2014 crop year and certified to being a beginning farmer or social disadvantaged farmer are eligible for a service fee refund.
- Eliminating payment reductions under the [Conservation Reserve Program](#) (CRP) for new and beginning farmers which will allow routine, prescribed, and emergency grazing outside the primary nesting season on enrolled land consistent with approved conservation plans. Previously, farmers and ranchers grazing on CRP land were subject to a reduction in CRP payments of up to 25 percent. Waiving these reductions for new and beginning farmers will provide extra financial support during times of emergency like drought and other natural disasters.
- Increasing payment rates to beginning farmers and ranchers under Emergency Assistance for [Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#). Under this provision, beginning farmers can claim up 90 percent of losses for lost livestock, such as bees, under ELAP. This is a fifty percent increase over previously available payment amounts to new and beginning farmers.

In the near future, USDA will also announce additional crop insurance program changes for beginning farmers and ranchers – including discounted premiums, waiver of administrative fees, and other benefits.

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
- For Direct Farm Ownership Loans, 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 purchase or improve farms or ranches. While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, the FSA has provided priority funding for members of targeted underserved groups. 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. 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.

March FSA Interest Rates

Farm Operating: 2.500%

Microloan: 2.500%

Farm Ownership: 3.500%

Farm Ownership - Joint Financing: 2.500%

Farm Ownership - Down Payment: 1.500%

Emergency - Actual Loss: 3.500%

Farm Storage Facility Loan 7 year term: 1.750%

Farm Storage Facility Loan 10 year term: 1.875%

Farm Storage Facility Loan 12 year term: 2.000%

Commodity Loan: 1.250%

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Stop 9410, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call toll-free at (866) 632-9992 (English) or (800) 877-8339 (TDD) or (866) 377-8642 (English Federal-relay) or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish Federal-relay).