Include County FSA Office Visit In Your Preparations for 2018

I am writing to you in my new capacity as the State Executive Director of the Nebraska Farm Service Agency (FSA). I want to take a moment to introduce myself and let you know that it truly is my honor and privilege to have the opportunity to work with and for you, our state’s farmers, ranchers and agricultural land owners.

While I am new to agriculture, I am not new to Nebraska nor the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). I am a proud Scottsbluff native who spent part of my professional career working for the State of Nebraska and later on food and nutrition programs as an Undersecretary at USDA. In that role, I gained a strong knowledge base about, and appreciation for, the programs and services that USDA delivers on behalf of consumers. I am excited for the opportunity to now lead the Nebraska FSA as it works to provide programs for you, the folks who deliver the food, fuel and fiber that those consumers need every day.

Since it’s late in the year, I am sure by now you are well on your way to thinking about, and planning for, the 2018 agricultural production season.

Whether your operation is big or small, there’s a great deal that goes into such preparation. I want to remind you Nebraska FSA should be a part of your thought process. From farm bill safety net enrollment, to conservation and environmental compliance, to farm credit needs, we have a place in your planning.

Consider, for instance, the article in this newsletter on environmental compliance. If you have a project to put up a new grain bin, for example, and you are considering financing through the FSA Farm Storage Facility Loan program, you must receive written approval from your FSA office before starting any site preparation or ground disturbance. The same would be true if you

Enrollment Open For ARC, PLC Safety Net

Producers who chose coverage from the safety-net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill, known as the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, can visit FSA county offices now through Aug. 1, 2018, to sign contracts to enroll in coverage for 2018.

ARC and PLC program payments issued in Nebraska in October 2017, for the 2016 crop, totaled over $638 million. Farmers enrolled about 85,000 farms in the two programs.

Although the choice between ARC and PLC is complete and remains in effect through 2018, producers still must enroll their farm by signing a contract each year to ensure it reflects the producers who currently share in the crop and the base acreage. It’s important for producers to report any

* See: Visit FSA, Page 10

* See: ARC, PLC Enrollment, Page 10
Production and Compliance

Acreage Reporting a Must for Program Eligibility

In order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements, all producers must file an accurate crop certification report by the applicable deadline.

For Nebraska, the acreage reporting date for 2018 spring-seeded crops, such as corn and soybeans, is July 16, 2018. Acres enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) must also be certified to FSA by this date.

The following exceptions apply to the above acreage reporting date:

- 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 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 16th.

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.

FSA requires that a producer’s report of acreage and specific crop data be provided on a map showing FSA’s field boundaries and acres. In most cases, FSA provides producers with a map of their farming interests representing that crop year.

To ensure an accurate acreage report is filed, producers are reminded to review the map to verify the field boundaries are accurately delineated. Producers should notify FSA of any changes or corrections needed prior to filing the acreage report with FSA.

Alert County FSA Office to Farm Ownership, Operation Changes

Changes in farm ownership or operation must be reported to FSA timely. A reconstitution may be needed to accurately represent a farm’s constitution for FSA program purposes. A reconstitution is the process of combining or dividing farms or tracts of land based on the farming operation.

Changes to existing FSA farms must be reported to FSA by Aug. 1, 2018, to maintain benefits for the current crop year.

The following are the different methods for dividing base acres when a farm division is completed:

**Estate Method** - The division of base acres for a parent farm among heirs according to the estate.

**Designation by Landowner Method** - The division of base acres in the manner agreed to by the parent farm owners and the purchaser or transferee. This method may be used when (1) part of a farm is sold or ownership is transferred; (2) an entire farm is sold to two or more persons; (3) farm ownership is transferred to two or more persons; (4) part of a tract is sold or ownership is transferred; (5) a tract is sold to two or more persons; or (6) tract ownership is transferred to two or more persons.

In order to use the Designation by Landowner Method, the land sold must have been owned for at least three years, or a waiver granted, and the buyer and seller must sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

**DCP Cropland Method** - Applicable to tract divisions, the division of base acres is proportional to the DCP Cropland acres associated on the resulting tracts.

**Default Method** - Applicable to farm divisions, the tracts identified with the resulting farms maintain the associated base acres.
Farmers, Landowners Reminded of Conservation Compliance Importance

Agricultural producers and land owners are reminded that conservation compliance is required on annually tilled acres considered to be Highly Erodible Land (HEL) or that fall under Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions. A violation of the requirements could put eligibility for federal farm program and crop insurance premium benefits in jeopardy.

To comply with the HEL and WC provisions, producers must fill out and sign FSA form AD-1026 certifying they will not:

- Plant or produce an agricultural commodity on highly erodible land without following a Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)-approved system;
- Plant or produce an agricultural commodity on a converted wetland; or
- Convert a wetland which makes the production of a commodity possible.

NRCS is responsible for conducting compliance reviews on HEL in the state. NRCS recently began an outreach effort called “Fix It, Don’t Disc It,” to educate farmers and landowners on a particular conservation compliance issue known as ephemeral gully erosion. Ephemeral gullies are small ditches in fields that occasionally can have concentrated water flow, resulting in soil erosion. Farmers often smooth these areas with a disc, temporarily making the land more farmable so that it can be planted to crops. Such activity, if the erosion continues, could be considered a conservation compliance violation and put a producer’s farm program and crop insurance premium benefits in jeopardy.

NRCS is asking producers to visit its field offices to receive assistance on identifying ephemeral gully erosion. NRCS will work with producers on conservation practices and management options available for repairing the erosion, including no-till, seeding cover crops or installing terraces.

In general, producers should notify FSA as a first point of contact prior to conducting land clearing or drainage type projects, to ensure the proposed actions meet compliance criteria. Actions such as clearing any trees to create new cropland will need to be reviewed.

Farmers and landowners with questions regarding how conservation compliance issues could impact farm program benefits and insurance premiums should contact their county FSA office. To learn more about ephemeral gully erosion and the “Fix It, Don’t Disc It” NRCS initiative, producers can visit the NRCS website www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov or stop in at a local NRCS office. To find a local office, go to: http://offices.usda.gov.
Joint Financing Expands Capital Access

The USDA Farm Service Agency’s (FSA) Direct Farm Ownership loans are a resource to help farmers and ranchers become owner-operators of family farms, improve and expand current operations, increase agricultural productivity, and assist with land tenure to save farmland for future generations.

Depending on the applicant’s needs, there are three types of Direct Farm Ownership Loans: regular, down payment and joint financing.

FSA also offers a Direct Farm Ownership Microloan option for smaller financial needs up to $50,000.

Joint financing allows FSA to provide more farmers and ranchers with access to capital. FSA lends up to 50 percent of the total amount financed. A commercial lender, a State program or the seller of the property being purchased, provides the balance of loan funds, with or without an FSA guarantee. The maximum loan amount for a Joint Financing loan is $300,000; the repayment period for the loan is up to 40 years.

To be eligible, the operation must be an eligible farm enterprise. Farm Ownership loan funds cannot be used to finance non-farm enterprises and all applicants must be able to meet general eligibility requirements. Loan applicants are also required to have participated in the business operations of a farm or ranch for at least three years out of the 10 years prior to the date the application is submitted. The applicant must show documentation that their participation in the business operation of the farm or ranch was not solely as a laborer.

Guaranteed Loan Program A Collaboration with Lenders

EZ program provides streamlined application to assist beginning, small and underserved farmers, ranchers with capital needs

FSA guaranteed loans allow lenders to provide agricultural credit to farmers who do not meet the lender’s normal underwriting criteria. Farmers and ranchers apply for a guaranteed loan through a lender, and the lender arranges for the guarantee. FSA can guarantee up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan. Guaranteed loans can be used for both farm ownership and operating purposes.

Guaranteed farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, construct or repair buildings, develop farmland to promote soil and water conservation or to refinance debt.

Guaranteed operating loans can be used to purchase livestock, farm equipment, feed, seed, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance and other operating expenses.

FSA can guarantee farm ownership and operating loans up to $1,399,000. 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.

FSA also has a streamlined version of these USDA guaranteed loans, tailored for smaller scale farms and urban producers. The program, called EZ Guarantee Loans, uses a simplified application process to help beginning, small, underserved and family farmers and ranchers apply for loans of up to $100,000 from USDA-approved lenders to purchase farmland or finance agricultural operations.

In addition to traditional lenders, such as banks and credit unions, microlenders, which include Community Development Financial Institutions and Rural Rehabilitation Corporations, also will be able to offer these EZ Guarantee Loans. Microlender loan limits will be up to $50,000 of EZ Guaranteed Loans, while banks, credit unions and other traditional USDA-approved lenders, can offer customers up to $100,000 to help with agricultural operation costs.

EZ Guarantee Loans offer low interest rates and terms up to seven years for financing operating expenses and 40 years for financing the purchase of farm real estate. USDA-approved lenders can issue these loans with the FSA guaranteeing the loan up to 95 percent.

For more information on these and other loan programs, please visit www.fsa.usda.gov and drop down to “Farm Loan Programs” under “Programs and Services” or contact your lender or local FSA farm loan office.
FSA Offers Farm Storage Facility Loans

Changes make program more accessible to all

The FSFL program allows producers of eligible commodities to obtain low-interest financing to build or upgrade farm storage and handling facilities. The maximum FSFL loan amount is $500,000 per loan.

Participants are required to provide a down payment of 15 percent, with Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) providing a loan for the remaining 85 percent of the net cost of the eligible storage facility, or permanent drying and handling equipment. Loan terms of 3, 5, 7, 10 or 12 years are available, depending on the amount of the loan. FSFL security requirements have been eased for loans in the amount of $100,000 and less.

The FSA Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program has also undergone several changes to make it more accessible to farms of all types and sizes. For example, the purchase of portable storage and handling equipment and trucks are now included as eligible items under the loan program. These items can be new or used.

The program also now includes a “microloan” option with lower down payments, designed to help producers, including new, small and mid-sized producers, grow their businesses and markets. The microloan option allows applicants to receive up to $50,000 in loan assistance.

Microloans Provide Options for Beginners, Small Farmers

FSA is offering farm ownership and operating microloans as an option to better serve the unique financial needs of beginning, niche and small family farm operations. This loan option also will be useful to specialty crop producers and community supported agriculture (CSA) operators.

Operating microloans can be used to pay for initial start-up expenses such as hoop houses to extend the growing season, essential tools, irrigation and annual expenses such as seed, fertilizer, utilities, land rents, marketing and distribution expenses.

Ownership microloans are available to help with farm land and building purchases, and soil and water conservation improvements.

Microloans provide up to $50,000 in loan assistance to qualified producers and can be issued to the applicant directly from FSA.

To learn more about the FSA microloan program visit www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans, or contact your local FSA office.
Livestock Indemnity Program
A Tool When Disaster Strikes

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to eligible producers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather, such as floods, blizzards, wildfires, extreme heat or extreme cold, and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law. LIP compensates eligible livestock owners and contract growers.

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 applicable adverse weather event or attack. A notice of loss must be filed with FSA within 30 days of the event or attack. A notice of loss must be filed with FSA within 30 days of when the loss of livestock is apparent.

Participants must provide the following supporting documentation to their local FSA office no later than 90 calendar days from the ending date of the calendar year in which the eligible loss condition occurred.

- Proof of death documentation
- Copy of growers contracts
- Proof of normal mortality documentation

USDA has established normal mortality rates for each type and weight range of eligible livestock, i.e. Adult Beef Cow = 1.5% and Non-Adult Beef Cattle (less than 400 pounds) = 3%. These established percentages reflect losses that are considered expected or typical under “normal” conditions. Producers who suffer livestock losses in 2017 must file both of the following:

- A notice of loss by the earlier of 30 calendar days of the event or when the loss was apparent
- An application for payment by March 31, 2018.

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

NAP: A Risk Management Tool for Grazing Lands, Specialty Crops

The Farm Service Agency encourages producers to examine available USDA crop risk protection options, including federal crop insurance and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage before the applicable crop sales closing deadline.

Producers are reminded that crops not covered by insurance may be eligible for NAP. 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 perennial grass forage and grazing crops, fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, bioenergy and industrial crops.

Producers can determine if crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP by visiting https://prodwebnlb.rma.usda.gov/apps/actuarialinformationbrowser2017/CropCriteria.aspx.

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/#.

For more information on FSA disaster programs and disaster designations, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/disaster.
Marketing Assistance Available for 2017 Crops

Retaining ‘beneficial interest’ one requirement for accessing Marketing Assistance Loans, LDPs

The 2014 Farm Bill authorized 2014-2018 crop year Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs).

MALs and LDPs provide financing and marketing assistance for commodities such as feed grains, soybeans and other oilseeds, pulse crops, rice, peanuts, cotton, wool and honey. MALs provide producers interim financing after harvest to help them meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows. A producer who is eligible to obtain an MAL, but agrees to forgo the loan, may obtain an LDP if such a payment is available.

To be eligible for a MAL or an LDP, producers must have a beneficial interest in the commodity, as well as comply with conservation and wetland protection requirements and submit an acreage report to account for all cropland on all farms, as well as other requirements.

A producer retains beneficial interest when control of and title to the commodity is maintained. For an LDP, the producer must retain beneficial interest in the commodity from the time of planting through the date the producer filed Form CCC-633EZ (page 1) in the FSA County Office. Producers are responsible for any loss in quantity or quality of commodities pledged as collateral for a farm-stored or warehouse stored loan. CCC will not assume any loss in quantity or quality of the loan collateral regardless of storage location.

The 2014 Farm Bill sets national loan rates. County and regional loan rates are based on each commodity’s national loan rate, and they vary by county or region and are based on the average prices and production of the county or region where the commodity is stored. For all loan-eligible commodities except extra-long staple (ELS) cotton, a producer may repay a MAL any time during the loan period at the lesser of the loan rate plus accrued interest and other charges or an alternative loan repayment rate as determined by CCC.

Producers may obtain MALs or receive LDPs on all or part of their eligible production anytime during the loan availability period. The loan availability period runs from when the commodity is normally harvested (or sheared for wool) until specified dates in the following calendar year. The final loan/LDP availability dates for the respective commodities are:

- Jan. 31 - Peanuts, Wool, Mohair and LDP only for Unshorn Pelts
- April 2 - Barley, Canola, Crambe, Flaxseed, Honey, Oats, Rapeseed, Sesame seed and Wheat
- May 31 - Corn, Dry peas, Grain sorghum, Lentils, Mustard seed, Long grain rice, Medium grain rice, Safflower, Small chickpeas, Large chickpeas, Cotton, Soybeans and Sunflower seed

For more information, producers should contact their local FSA county office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

Maintain Quality of Farm-Stored Loan Grain

Bins are ideally designed to hold a level volume of grain. When bins are overfilled and grain is heaped up, airflow is hindered and the chance of spoilage increases. Producers who take out marketing assistance loans and use the farm-stored grain as collateral should remember that they are responsible for maintaining the quality of the grain through the term of the loan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>Production Unit</th>
<th>2014-2018</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>bushel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>bushel</td>
<td>$1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grain Sorghum</td>
<td>bushel</td>
<td>$1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barley</td>
<td>bushel</td>
<td>$1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oats</td>
<td>bushel</td>
<td>$1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upland Cotton</td>
<td>pound</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELS Cotton</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Grain Rice</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Grain Rice</td>
<td>cwt</td>
<td>$6.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soybeans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Oilseeds</td>
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<td>Lentils</td>
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<td>Peanuts</td>
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NOTE: The upland cotton loan rate is subject to change for 2017 and 2018.
USDA Allows Early Out on CRP Acres Transferred to Beginners

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is offering an early termination opportunity for certain Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts, making it easier to transfer property to the next generation of farmers and ranchers, including family members. The land that is eligible for the early termination is among the least environmentally sensitive land enrolled in CRP.

Normally if a landowner terminates a CRP contract early, they are required to repay all previous payments plus interest. The land tenure policy put in place at the beginning of 2017 waives this repayment if the land is transferred to a beginning farmer or rancher through a sale or lease with an option to buy.

With CRP enrollment close to the Congressionally-mandated cap of 24 million acres, the early termination will also allow USDA to enroll other land with higher conservation value elsewhere.

Acres terminated early from CRP under these land tenure provisions will be eligible for priority enrollment consideration into the CRP Grasslands, if eligible; or the Conservation Stewardship Program or Environmental Quality Incentives Program, as determined by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

According to the Tenure, Ownership and Transition of Agricultural Land survey, conducted by USDA in 2014, U.S. farmland owners expect to transfer 93 million acres to new ownership during 2015-2019. This represents 10 percent of all farmland across the nation.

Details on the early termination opportunity are available at local USDA service centers. For more information about CRP and to find out if your acreage is eligible for early contract termination, contact your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office or go online at www.fsa.usda.gov/crp.

Check with County FSA Office on CRP Enrollment Opportunities

**Nebraska Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP, CRP Grasslands Enrollment An Available Option**

In October USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced the suspension of all new CRP continuous offers received or submitted after Sept. 30, 2017, and noted the suspension would continue until later in the 2018 fiscal year. The suspension was needed to provide time to review CRP allocation levels and to avoid exceeding the program statutory cap of 24 million enrolled acres.

The CRP acreage cap is a provision of the 2014 Farm Bill. Current enrollment is about 23.5 million acres nationwide.

However, FSA will continue to accept eligible offers for state-specific Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and CRP Grasslands enrollment. CRP Grasslands allows land owners and operators to protect grassland, including rangeland and pastureland, while maintaining the areas as grazing lands.

In Nebraska, in addition to the CRP Grasslands enrollment, the Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP is still available. See the article on the next page for additional detail. The project is available in portions of Banner, Buffalo, Chase, Cheyenne, Dawson, Deuel, Dundy, Franklin, Frontier, Furnas, Garden, Gosper, Harlan, Hayes, Hitchcock, Kearney, Keith, Kimball, Lincoln, McPherson, Morrill, Nuckolls, Phelps, Red Willow, Scotts Bluff, Sioux and Webster counties.

CRP pays farmers and ranchers who remove sensitive lands from production and plant certain grasses, shrubs and trees that improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and increase wildlife habitat. In return for enrolling in CRP, USDA, through FSA, provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance.

Landowners enter into contracts that last between 10 and 15 years. Offers are subject to fiscal year 2018 rental rates, which have been adjusted to reflect current market conditions and were established after careful review of the latest USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) cash rent data.

For more information about CRP or to discuss possible enrollment options, contact your local FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov/crp. To locate your local FSA office, visit http://offices.usda.gov.
Management Activities a Contract Requirement

All Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) participants with contracts from 2004 and beyond must complete at least one management activity during the life of the contract. Contracts that have been re-enrolled will require two management activities, one at the beginning and one mid-contract. Management activities must be completed before the end of year six for 10-year contracts. Required management activities must not occur during the last three years of the CRP contract. An approved Conservation Plan of Operation will provide information on when the CRP management activity is scheduled during the life of the CRP contract.

Transition Incentive Program Offers Benefit for CRP Transfer

Retired or retiring land owners or operators are encouraged to transition their Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres to beginning, veteran or underserved farmers or ranchers through the Transition Incentives Program (TIP). TIP provides annual rental payments to the retiring farmer for up to two additional years after the CRP contract expires, provided the transition is not to a family member. Enrollment in TIP is on a continuous basis.

Beginning, veteran or underserved farmers and ranchers and retiring CRP participants may enroll in TIP beginning one year before the expiration date of the CRP contract or Aug. 15. For example, if a CRP contract is scheduled to expire on Sept. 30, 2018, the land may be offered for enrollment in TIP beginning Oct. 1, 2017, through Aug. 15, 2018. The TIP application must be submitted prior to completing the lease or sale of the affected lands. New land owners or renters must return the land to production using sustainable grazing or farming methods.

For more information on TIP, visit https://www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation.

USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the State of Nebraska currently are taking applications for enrollment in the Platte-Republican Resources Area Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). CREP is a voluntary program that is part of the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) operated by FSA.

CREP allows states to develop projects with specific end goals, and its costs are shared between the federal government and state resources.

FSA and the State of Nebraska launched the Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP in 2005. It is designed to reduce irrigation water use, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat through the establishment of vegetative cover using approved CRP practices. It is available to landowners/farmers with property in specified areas of the Republican River Basin and the North Platte, South Platte and Platte River basins.

Under the Nebraska Platte-Republican River CREP, landowners are provided irrigated land rental payments to convert their irrigated crop land into CRP habitat. Up to 100,000 acres can be enrolled in the project, with the contracts running from 10-15 years.

At present, there are approximately 48,000 acres enrolled.

Landowners/farmers with questions about this program should contact their county FSA office for more information.
Producers Asked to Complete 2017 Census of Agriculture

Nebraska’s farmers and ranchers have the opportunity to 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, recently mailed to farmers and ranchers, is a complete count of all U.S. farms, ranches and those who operate them. Completed surveys are due Feb. 5, 2018.

The Census of Agriculture highlights land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures, and other topics. 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).

For more information about the 2017 Census, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov.

FSFL loans also can be used to finance wash and pack equipment used post-harvest, before a commodity is placed in cold storage.

The list of commodities that are included in the FSFL program are: aquaculture, floriculture, fruits (including nuts) and vegetables, corn, grain sorghum, rice, oilseeds, oats, wheat, triticale, spelt, buckwheat, lentils, chickpeas, dry peas, sugar, peanuts, barley, rye, hay, honey, hops, maple sap, unprocessed meat and poultry, eggs, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt and renewable biomass.

All loan requests are subject to an environmental evaluation.接受delivery of equipment, or starting any site preparation or construction before loan approval may impede the successful completion of an environmental evaluation and may adversely affect loan eligibility.

Producers do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply.
Management activities must be completed outside the primary nesting season. For Nebraska the primary nesting season is May 1 through July 15.

Management activities create plant diversity for wildlife as well as enhance permanent cover. Producers can choose from the following appropriate management practices:

- Prescribed burn and inter-seeding;
- Tillage and inter-seeding;
- Spraying with inter-seeding;
- Haying with inter-seeding; or
- Prescribed grazing with inter-seeding.

Inter-seeding is optional if the existing CRP cover meets plant diversity requirements. If using the broadcast seeding method, the seeding rate should be doubled. If prescribed burning is chosen, a “burn packet” consisting of a burn plan and burn permit should be obtained from your local FSA office prior to burning. The FSA staff also will provide instructions for grass seeding for the areas being inter-seeded.

Based on the choice of practice, your local FSA office will furnish the necessary forms to report completion, cost associated with the activity and request for cost-share assistance. CRP participants must complete and sign the FSA-848B and provide necessary paperwork such as bills and seed receipts to receive cost-share assistance for the management activity.