

September 2019



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Nebraska FSA State Newsletter

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A Message from the State Executive Director

I want to start my column this month by calling your attention to the final two articles in this newsletter. Even though they are at the bottom, they both are very important.

One lists upcoming deadlines for a variety of FSA-administered programs. Please take a look at these and, for the ones that apply to you, make sure you are working with your local office to complete required paperwork by the deadline. In most cases, our offices are taking appointments so that they can be prepared for your arrival and your visit can be as efficient as possible.

Lonnie Starke
Mark Jagels

Program Chiefs:

Cathy Anderson,
Production/Compliance
Doug Klein,
Conservation/Price Support
Mark Wilke, *Farm Loan*
Tim Divis, *Executive Officer*

To find more information about FSA programming or contact information for your local office, go to www.fsa.usda.gov/ne.

The second highlights farm loan program interest rates. Reviewing these rates in conjunction with the two farm loan articles near the bottom of this newsletter, folks can learn about FSA loans and how these may be able to assist producers who are having difficulty securing credit through their normal financial avenues.

In this column I often call attention to the dedication and hard work of our county office employees. This month I also want to offer a salute to those who serve as members of our County FSA Committees (COCs) across the state. COCs are comprised of elected farmer/rancher members and can be found in every county that has a USDA FSA office. They provide you, our farmer and rancher FSA customers, with local representation. They assist FSA staff with implementation of programs according to statutory and regulatory requirements and can provide local input on things like yields, weather, program appeals and other producer concerns. They operate regular meetings that generally can have both a public session, as well as an executive session when producer privacy needs to be observed.

It has been a challenging year for all of you as producers, and these FSA County Committee members across the state are working hard on your behalf to provide guidance to their county office in the delivery of assistance programs to you. These COC members, who are also producers themselves, provide their time and attention often while managing their own operations. If you see them around your community, please take a moment to thank them for their work.

COCs are elected for you, by you, with ballots mailed each year to you, to be returned to your FSA County Office. FSA will be releasing the 2019 election ballots in early November. Please keep an eye out for more information on this election as the voting period nears. Information will be shared in this newsletter, as well as through your county FSA newsletter and local media.

That's all I have for this month. Please stay safe as you begin your harvest activities.

--Nancy Johner

FSA Accepting Applications Through Oct. 31 to Help Cover Producers' Costs for Organic Certification

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that organic producers and handlers can apply for federal funds to assist with the cost of receiving and maintaining organic certification through the [Organic Certification Cost Share Program](#) (OCCSP). Applications for fiscal 2019 funding are due Oct. 31, 2019.

OCCSP received continued support through the 2018 Farm Bill. It provides cost-share assistance to producers and handlers of agricultural products for the costs of obtaining or maintaining organic

certification under the USDA's National Organic Program. Eligible producers include any certified producers or handlers who have paid organic certification fees to a USDA-accredited certifying agent. Eligible expenses for cost-share reimbursement include application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement and arrangement requirements, travel expenses for inspectors, user fees, sales assessments and postage.

Certified producers and handlers are eligible to receive reimbursement for up to 75 percent of certification costs each year, up to a maximum of \$750 per certification scope, including crops, livestock, wild crops, handling and state organic program fees.

More Information

To learn more about organic certification cost share, please visit the [OCCSP webpage](#), view the [notice of funds availability on the Federal Register](#), or contact your [FSA county office](#). To learn more about USDA support for organic agriculture, visit usda.gov/organic.

Alert FSA to Bank Account Changes for Timely Payments

FSA program payments are issued electronically into your bank account. In order to make timely payments, you need to notify your FSA servicing office if you close your account or if your bank information is changed for whatever reason (such as your financial institution merging or being purchased). Payments can be delayed if FSA is not notified of changes to account and bank routing numbers.

For some programs, payments are not made until the following year. For example, payments for crop year 2018 through the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage program are scheduled to be paid in the coming months.

If the bank account was closed due to the death of an individual or dissolution of an entity or partnership before the payment was issued, please notify your local FSA office as soon as possible to claim your payment.

Livestock Inventory Records Important for Disaster Programs

Producers are reminded to keep updated livestock inventory records. These records are necessary in the event of a natural disaster and are an important part of disaster assistance program applications, including applications for the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) and the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP).

When disasters strike, the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) can assist producers who suffered excessive livestock death losses and grazing or feed losses due to eligible natural disasters.

To participate in livestock disaster assistance programs, producers will be required to provide verifiable documentation of death losses resulting from an eligible adverse weather event and must submit a notice of loss to their local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is apparent. For grazing or feed losses, producers must submit a notice of loss to their local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent and should maintain documentation and receipts.

To be eligible for livestock deaths, producers must submit evidence to support their losses. Some examples of records that could be used to help support a claim include: veterinary records, contemporaneous producer records, veterinary certification existing at the time of the event, balance sheets, brand inspection records, loan records, docking records, bank statements, shearing records, farm credit balance sheets, property tax records, ear tag records, trucking and/or livestock hauling records, sales and purchase receipts, inventory records used for tax purposes, private insurance documents, chattel inspections, and canceled check documentation.

To be eligible for livestock injuries, producers must submit one of the following documents: sales receipt from a livestock auction, sale barn or other similar livestock sales facility; private insurance documents; or processing plant receipt. At a minimum, these records must include livestock kind, type, and weight, and the price for which the animal was sold.

For more information on documentation requirements associated with receiving disaster-related assistance, contact your local FSA office.

FSA Reminds Producers to Consider NAP Risk Protection Coverage for Non-insurable Crops

Fall Application Deadlines Approach for 2020 Coverage of Alfalfa, Grass, Other Crops

Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds 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 deadline.

NAP application deadlines can vary by county and by crop. In Nebraska, NAP application deadlines for coverage in the 2020 production season are approaching and include:

- Rye, triticale and wheat: Sept. 30, 2019
- Alfalfa, mixed forages and grass: Nov. 15, 2019
- Apples, aronia berries and grapes: Nov. 20, 2019

Producers interested in NAP are encouraged to contact their county FSA office for more information ahead of the deadline.

Producers are reminded that crops not covered by federal crop insurance may be eligible for NAP. 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. NAP can protect against losses associated with lower yields, destroyed crops or prevented planting.

NAP basic coverage is available at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production. The 2018 Farm Bill allows for “buy-up” levels of NAP coverage from 50 to 65 percent of expected production in 5 percent increments, at 100 percent of the average market price. Buy-up coverage is not available for crops intended for grazing.

For all coverage levels, the NAP service fee is the lesser of \$325 per crop or \$825 per producer per county, not to exceed a total of \$1,950 for a producer with farming interests in multiple counties. Producers qualifying as beginning, underserved, or limited resource farmers or those who

can meet eligibility requirements as a military veteran are eligible for free catastrophic (basic) level of NAP coverage, as well as the potential for reduction in “buy-up” premiums.

To learn more about NAP, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/nap.

USDA Opens 2019 Enrollment for Agriculture Risk Coverage, Price Loss Coverage Programs

Agricultural producers can now enroll in the [Agriculture Risk Coverage \(ARC\) and Price Loss Coverage \(PLC\) programs](#), two popular safety net programs, for the 2019 crop year. Interested producers must sign up for either program by March 15, 2020.

The 2018 Farm Bill reauthorized and made updates to these two USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs. ARC provides income support payments on historical base acres when actual crop revenue declines below a specified guarantee level. PLC program provides income support payments on historical base acres when the price for a covered commodity falls below its effective reference price.

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 rice), safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

Nebraska Farm Service Agency and Nebraska Extension will be hosting producer education meetings on the ARC and PLC programs in November and December at locations across the state. More information will be available on these meetings in the coming month.

Updated provisions in the 2018 Farm Bill allow producers with an interest in a farm to enroll and elect coverage in crop-by-crop ARC-County or PLC, or ARC-Individual for the entire farm, for program year 2019. The election applies to both the 2019 and 2020 crop years. If a 2019 election is not submitted by the deadline of March 15, 2020, the election defaults to the current elections of the crops on the farm established under the 2014 Farm Bill. No payments will be earned in 2019 if the election defaults.

For crop years 2021 through 2023, producers will have an opportunity to make new elections. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the farm.

Once the 2019 election and enrollment are completed, producers on the farm for 2020 can complete an enrollment contract for the 2020 crop year beginning Oct. 7, 2019 and ending June 30, 2020.

Although 2019 enrollment begins Sept. 3, 2019 and must occur first, a producer waiting until Oct. 7, 2019 to enroll is afforded the opportunity to enroll in either program for both 2019 and 2020 during the same office visit. During this time, farm owners have a one-time opportunity to update PLC payment yields that takes effect beginning with crop year 2020. If the owner accompanies the producer to the office, the yield update may be completed during the same office visit.

In partnership with USDA, the University of Illinois and Texas A&M University are offering web-based decision tools to assist producers in making informed, educated decisions using crop data

specific to their respective farming operations. These decision tools can be found at fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.

Producers are reminded that enrolling in ARC or PLC programs can impact eligibility for some forms of crop insurance. Producers who elect and enroll in PLC also have the option of purchasing Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO) through the [USDA Risk Management Agency \(RMA\)](#). Producers of covered commodities who elect ARC are ineligible for SCO on their planted acres.

Upland cotton farmers who choose to enroll seed cotton base acres in ARC or PLC are ineligible for the stacked income protection plan (STAX) on their planted cotton acres. To be eligible for STAX coverage, producers must not enroll their seed cotton base acres into the ARC or PLC programs.

For more information on ARC and PLC, download our [program fact sheet](#) or our [2014-2018 farm bills comparison fact sheet](#), or visit fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.

Submit Loan Requests for Financing Early

The Farm Loan team located in offices across Nebraska is already working on operating loans for spring 2020 so it is important that potential borrowers submit their requests early so they can be timely processed. The farm loan team can help determine which loan programs are best for applicants.

FSA offers a wide range of low-interest loans that can meet the financial needs of any farm operation for just about any purpose. The traditional **farm operating and farm ownership loans** can help large and small farm operations take advantage of early purchasing discounts for spring inputs as well expenses throughout the year.

Microloans are a simplified loan program that will provide up to \$50,000 for both Farm Ownership and Operating Microloans to eligible applicants. These loans, targeted for smaller operations and non-traditional operations, can be used for operating expenses, starting a new agricultural enterprise, purchasing equipment, and other needs associated with a farming operation. The staff at farm loan offices across the state can provide more details on farm operating and microloans and provide loan applications. Loans to beginning farmers and members of underserved groups are a priority.

Other types of loans available include:

Marketing Assistance Loans allow producers to use eligible commodities as loan collateral and obtain a 9-month loan while the crop is in storage. These loans provide cash flow to the producer and allow them to market the crop when prices may be more advantageous.

Farm Storage Facility Loans can be used to build permanent structures used to store eligible commodities, or for storage and handling trucks, or portable or permanent handling equipment. A variety of structures are eligible under this loan, including bunker silos, grain bins, hay storage structures and refrigerated structures for vegetables and fruit. A producer may borrow up to \$500,000 per loan.

Producers also can use the farm loan discovery tool at farmers.gov/fund to explore loans that may be the best fit for their operation. See article below for more information.

To learn more about FSA's farm loan programs, interested applicants can visit a county USDA service center. To find the nearest service center, visit www.farmers.gov and click on the office locator tool.

Online Tool Helps Producers Find Farm Loans that Fit Their Operation

A new online tool can help farmers and ranchers find information on U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) farm loans that may best fit their operations. USDA has launched the new *Farm Loan Discovery Tool* as the newest feature on farmers.gov, the Department's self-service website for farmers.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers a variety of loan options to help farmers finance their operations. From buying land to financing the purchase of equipment, FSA loans can help. Compared to this time last year, FSA has seen an 18 percent increase in the amount it has obligated for direct farm ownership loans, and through the 2018 Farm Bill, has [increased the limits](#) for several loan products.

USDA conducted field research in eight states, gathering input from farmers and FSA farm loan staff to better understand their needs and challenges.

How the Tool Works

Farmers who are looking for financing options to operate a farm or buy land can answer a few simple questions about what they are looking to fund and how much money they need to borrow. After submitting their answers, farmers will be provided information on farm loans that best fit their specific needs. The loan application and additional resources also will be provided.

Farmers can download application quick guides that outline what to expect from preparing an application to receiving a loan decision. There are four guides that cover loans to individuals, entities, and youth, as well as information on microloans. The guides include general eligibility requirements and a list of required forms and documentation for each type of loan. These guides can help farmers prepare before their first USDA service center visit with a loan officer.

Farmers can access the *Farm Loan Discovery Tool* by visiting farmers.gov/fund and clicking the "Start" button. Follow the prompts and answer five simple questions to receive loan information that is applicable to your agricultural operation. The tool is built to run on any modern browser like Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or the Safari browser, and is fully functional on mobile devices. It does not work in Internet Explorer.

About Farmers.gov

In 2018, USDA unveiled farmers.gov, a dynamic, mobile-friendly public website combined with an authenticated portal where farmers will be able to apply for programs, process transactions, and manage accounts.

The *Farm Loan Discovery Tool* is one of many resources on farmers.gov to help connect farmers to information that can help their operations. Earlier this year, USDA launched the *My Financial Information* feature, which enables farmers to view their loan information, history, payments, and alerts by logging into the website.

USDA is building farmers.gov for farmers, by farmers. In addition to the interactive farm loan features, the site also offers a Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool. Farmers can visit farmers.gov/recover/disaster-assistance-tool#step-1 to find disaster assistance programs that can help their operation recover from natural disasters.

With feedback from customers and field employees who serve those customers, farmers.gov delivers farmer-focused features through an agile, iterative process to deliver the greatest immediate value to America's agricultural producers – helping farmers and ranchers do right, and feed everyone.

For more information or to locate your USDA Service Center, visit farmers.gov.

Dates to Remember

Sept. 27, 2019 – Deadline to enroll in the Dairy Margin Coverage program

Sept. 30, 2019 – Deadline to submit a Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program application for coverage for rye, triticale and wheat in the 2020 production season

Oct. 31, 2019 – Deadline to submit an application for the Organic Certification Cost Share Program

Nov. 15, 2019 - Deadline to submit a Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program application for coverage for alfalfa, mixed forages and grass in the 2020 production season

Nov. 20, 2019 – Deadline to submit a Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program application for coverage for aronia berries and grapes in the 2020 production season

Dec. 6, 2019 – Deadline to submit an application for the 2019 Market Facilitation Program

****Please note any above NAP calendar references may not be inclusive for all NAP-covered crops; NAP participants should contact their County FSA Office to confirm important program deadlines.**

September FSA Interest Rates

OPERATING/OWNERSHIP

Farm Operating: 2.75%

Microloan Operating: 2.75%

Farm Ownership: 3.5%

Farm Ownership - Joint Financing: 2.5%

Farm Ownership - Down Payment: 1.5%

Emergency - Actual Loss: 3.75%

FARM STORAGE

Farm Storage Facility Loan 3 year term: 1.625%

Farm Storage Facility Loan 5 year term: 1.625%

Farm Storage Facility Loan 7 year term: 1.75%

Farm Storage Facility Loan 10 year term: 1.875%
Farm Storage Facility Loan 12 year term: 1.875%

MARKETING ASSISTANCE

Commodity Loan: 2.875%

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).