

March 2020



## Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

# NEWSLETTER

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## Oregon FSA Newsletter

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#### **State Executive Director:**

Barry Bushue

#### **State Committee:**

Anna Sullivan, Chair

Sam Asai, Member

Phil Hassinger, Member

### **A Message from our SED**

Despite the erratic weather, Spring arrives on March 20. While still very wet in many areas, some have been able to get a start in the fields. On my daily commute, I have seen weed control, plowing, cultivation and even some planting. I haven't been that lucky on my place.

Spring is a busy time, and for most, a time of hope and progress. While the weather seldom really cooperates, it is the time we start tending our existing crops and planting new ones. Farmers are maybe the world's most optimistic people. Too wet, too dry, too hot, and too cold. But we still move forward deciding what to plant, what to keep, and what to sell. As frustrating as it may be at times, we still make plans for a "better year this year".

I recognize that all farmers are not as hopeful. Some in our communities are suffering real hardship and are having to make much tougher decisions than what to plant. Something we should

TJ Hansell, Member  
Denver Pugh, Member

**Administration:**

Martin Nguyen,  
Administrative Officer

**Farm Programs:**

Kent Willett, Acting Chief

**Farm Loan Programs:**

Kathey Brucker, Chief

**Next STC Meeting:**

May 20-21, (tentative)

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all recognize and try to help, when and where we can. Some segments of Oregon's agriculture are dealing with price, market and production issues. The folks in the Northeastern counties that are dealing with the aftermath of floods are looking at a much different picture. Our county offices in those areas are working to help farmers with our applicable programs and I encourage those impacted to contact their county offices.

The looming deadline for ARC/PLC cannot go unmentioned. **The 2019 enrollment end date is March 16, 2020, since March 15, 2020 is on a Sunday.** Appointments must be prior to that date if producers want to make an election. If producers do not make an election by that deadline, they will be defaulted to their 2018 election and will receive no payments for the 2019 crop year. If you qualify for ARC/PLC and you haven't contacted your county office, please do so this week.

COVID-19 is certainly dominating the news and even impacting our social interactions. FSA offices remain open and our staff are taking the appropriate precautions to keep our workplaces as safe and clean as possible. We are not seeing any problems in offices yet and any staff that become ill will be staying home. I would urge producers who are sick or have a fever or cough, and have a deadline to meet to please, contact your local office by phone for guidance in how to finalize your signup prior to that deadline.

I hope that your Spring will be kind and that you are timely in the things you need to get done on the farm.

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## March Interest Rates

**90 Day Treasury Bill:** 1.625%  
**Farm Operating Loans-Direct:** 2.625%  
**Farm Ownership Loans-Direct:** 3.25%  
**Farm Ownership Down Payment:** 1.5%  
**Emergency Loans Actual Loss:** 3.625%  
**Farm Storage Facility Loan 3 Year:** 1.375%  
**Farm Storage Facility Loan 5 Year:** 1.375%  
**Farm Storage Facility Loan 7 Year:** 1.500%  
**Farm Storage Facility Loan 10 Year:** 1.625%  
**Farm Storage Facility Loan 12 Year:** 1.625%

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## Important Dates

**March 16:** ARC-PLC Program Year 2019 signup ends.

**March 23:** Added Causes of Loss Under WHIP+ and Announces Disaster Assistance for Sugar Beet Producers

**May 15:** CRP Grasslands Sign-up begins March 16, 2020 through May 15, 2020.

**Within 15 Days:** The earlier of (A) when a disaster occurred or damage to the crop or commodity becomes apparent or (B) normal harvest date for reporting a Notice of Loss for NAP **Within 30 Days:** When loss is apparent for reporting a Notice of Loss for LIP and ELAP.

**TAP:** Submit the application either 90 calendar days after the disaster event or the date when the loss is apparent.

**Applications accepted for WHIP+** for milk loss, and loss of on-farm stored commodities resulting from eligible disaster (into 2020).

**June 15: Nomination Open for 2020 FSA County Committee Elections**

**June 30: ARC-PLC Program Year 2020** signup ends.

**July 15: Acreage Reporting Deadline:** Perennial Forage for 2019 and subsequent years.

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## **FSA Encourages Producers to Enroll Soon in Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs**

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) encourages agricultural producers to enroll now in the Agriculture Risk Loss (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs. March 16, 2020 is the enrollment deadline for the 2019 crop year (since March 15 falls on a Sunday).

Although more than 200,000 producers have enrolled to date, FSA anticipates 1.5 million producers will enroll for ARC and PLC. By enrolling soon, producers can beat the rush as the deadline nears.

FSA offices have multiple programs competing for the time and attention of our staff. Because of the importance and complexities of the ARC and PLC programs; and to ensure FSA meets your program delivery expectations, please do not wait to start the enrollment process. Call your FSA county office and make an appointment soon to ensure your elections are made and contracts signed well ahead of the deadlines.

ARC and PLC provide financial protections to farmers from substantial drops in crop prices or revenues and are vital economic safety nets for most American farms.

The programs cover the following commodities: barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium and short grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

Until March 16, producers who have not yet enrolled in ARC or PLC for 2019 can enroll for both 2019 and 2020 during the same visit to an FSA county office unless yield updates are requested. Additionally, farm owners have a one-time opportunity to update PLC payment yields that take effect beginning with crop year 2020. If the owner accompanies the producer to the office, the yield update and enrollments may be completed during the same office visit.

### **More Information**

For more information on ARC and PLC, download our [program fact sheet](#) or our [2014-2018 farm bills comparison fact sheet](#). Online ARC and PLC election decision tools are available at [fsa.usda.gov/arc/plc](https://fsa.usda.gov/arc/plc). To enroll, contact your [FSA county office](#) for an appointment.

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## **USDA Opens Signup March 23 for Added Causes of Loss Under WHIP+ and Announces Disaster Assistance for Sugar Beet Producers**

USDA announced additional disaster assistance available to agricultural producers, including producers impacted by drought and excess moisture as well as sugar beet growers. Through WHIP+, USDA is helping producers recover from losses related to 2018 and 2019 natural disasters.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will open signup on March 23 for producers to apply for eligible losses of drought (D3 or above) and excess moisture. USDA is also entering into agreements with

six sugar beet processing cooperatives to distribute \$285 million to grower members of those cooperatives who experienced loss.

In June 2019, more than \$3 billion was made available through a disaster relief package passed by Congress and signed by President Trump. In December 2019, Congress passed, and President Trump signed the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2020 that provides an additional \$1.5 billion for the continuation of disaster assistance program delivery.

### **WHIP+ New Qualifying Disaster Events**

The bill added excessive moisture and D3 and D4 drought as qualifying losses for WHIP+ assistance.

Beginning March 23, producers who suffered either of these types of loss in 2018 and/or 2019 can apply for WHIP+ assistance at their local FSA office. For drought, a producer is eligible if any area of the county in which the loss occurred was rated D3 (Extreme Drought) or higher on the U.S. Drought Monitor during calendar years 2018 or 2019.

### **WHIP+ Sugar Beet Loss Assistance**

As also directed in the bill, USDA will provide \$285 million through sugar beet processing cooperatives to compensate grower members for sugar beet crop losses in 2018 and 2019. Details will be finalized in agreements between USDA and participating sugar beet processing cooperatives. Sugar beet producers who are members of these cooperatives and experienced losses may contact their cooperative for more information about how this sugar beet crop assistance will be administered.

### **WHIP+ for Quality Loss**

In addition, producers have reported widespread crop quality loss from eligible disaster events that results in price deductions or penalties when marketing the damaged crops. The Appropriations bill expands WHIP+ to include assistance for crop quality loss. FSA is gathering data and input from producers and stakeholders regarding the extent and types of quality loss nationwide.

### **Eligibility**

To be eligible for WHIP+, producers must have suffered losses of certain crops, trees, bushes, or vines in counties with a Presidential Emergency Disaster Declaration or a Secretarial Disaster Designation (primary counties only) for the following named natural disaster events; hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, typhoons, volcanic activity, snowstorms, wildfires, and now excessive moisture that occurred in 2018 or 2019. Also, losses located in a county not designated by the Secretary as a primary county may be eligible if the producer provides documentation showing that the loss was due to a qualifying natural disaster event.

For drought, counties having a D3 or D4 Drought Monitor classification in any portion of the county anytime during calendar year 2018 or 2019 will also be eligible.

A list of counties that received qualifying hurricane declarations and designations is available at [farmers.gov/recover/whip-plus](https://farmers.gov/recover/whip-plus). The U.S. Drought Monitor is available at <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>.

Because livestock losses are covered by other disaster recovery programs offered through FSA, these losses are not eligible for WHIP+.

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## **2020 Acreage Reporting Dates**

In order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements, all producers are encouraged to visit their local FSA office to file an accurate crop certification report by the applicable deadline.

Acreage reporting dates vary by crop and by county so please contact your local FSA office for a list of county-specific deadlines.

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 “cover only,” “green manure,” “left standing,” or “seed,” then the acreage must be reported by July 15th.

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.

For questions regarding crop certification and crop loss reports, please contact your local FSA office.

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## **Gilliam, Hood River, Morrow, Sherman, and Wasco Counties are Eligible for Emergency Loans**

Gilliam, Hood River, Morrow, Sherman, and Wasco Counties were declared a contiguous county disaster due to freezing and extremely cold temperatures that occurred from October 2, 2019 to October 10, 2019. Under this designation, producers with operations in any primary or contiguous county are eligible to apply for low interest emergency loans.

Emergency loans help producers recover from production and physical losses due to drought, flooding and other natural disasters or quarantine.

Producers have eight months from the date of the declaration to apply for emergency loan assistance. FSA will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability. Producers can borrow up to 100 percent of actual production or physical losses, to a maximum amount of \$500,000.

For more information about emergency loans, please contact your local FSA office or visit [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

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## **Farm Service Agency Expands Payment Options**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) expanded its payment options to now accept debit cards and Automated Clearing House (ACH) debit. These paperless payment options enable FSA customers to pay farm loan payments, measurement service fees, farm program debt repayments and administrative service fees, as well as to purchase aerial maps.

Previously, only cash, check, money orders and wires were accepted. By using debit cards and ACH debit, transactions are securely processed from the customer’s financial institution through [Pay.gov](http://Pay.gov), the U.S. Treasury’s online payment hub.

While traditional collection methods like cash and paper checks will continue, offering the new alternatives will improve effectiveness and convenience to customers while being more cost effective.

This marks the beginning of a multi-phased roll-out of new payment options for USDA customers. Ultimately, payment option flexibility will be extended to allow farmers and producers to use debit cards and ACH debit payments to make payments for all FSA programs, including farm storage facility loan repayments, farm loan facility fees, marketing assistance loan repayments, Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) administrative fees and premiums and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) fees.

To learn more, contact your [FSA county office](#), visit [farmers.gov](http://farmers.gov), or download the [“Make Your FSA Payments Instantly”](#) fact sheet.

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## USDA Announces Updates for Honeybee Producers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced updates to the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP). These updates include changes required by the 2018 Farm Bill as well as discretionary changes intended to improve the administration of the program and clarify existing program requirements. ELAP was previously administered based on FSA’s fiscal year but will now run according to the calendar year. Producers are still required to submit an application for payment within 30 calendar days of the end of the program year. This is not a policy change but will affect the deadline. The signup deadline for calendar year 2020 losses is January 30, 2021.

Starting in 2020, producers will have 15 days from when the loss is first apparent, instead of 30 days, to file a honeybee notice of loss. This change provides consistency between ELAP and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, which also has a 15-day notice of loss period for honey. For other covered losses, including livestock feed, grazing and farm-raised fish losses, the notice of loss deadline for ELAP will remain 30 days from when the loss is first apparent to the producer.

Program participants who were paid for the loss of a honeybee colony or hive in either or both of the previous two years will be required to provide additional documentation to substantiate how current year inventory was acquired.

If the honeybee colony loss incurred was because of Colony Collapse Disorder, program participants must provide a producer certification that the loss was a direct result of at least three of the five symptoms of Colony Collapse Disorder, which include:

- the loss of live queen and/or drone bee populations inside the hives;
- rapid decline of adult worker bee population outside the hives, leaving brood poorly or completely unattended;
- absence of dead adult bees inside the hive and outside the entrance of the hive;
- absence of robbing collapsed colonies; and
- at the time of collapse, varroa mite and Nosema populations are not at levels known to cause economic injury or population decline.

For honeybees, ELAP covers colony losses, honeybee hive losses (the physical structure) and honeybee feed losses in instances where the colony, hive or feed has been destroyed by a natural disaster or, in the case of colony losses, because of Colony Collapse Disorder. Colony losses must be in excess of normal mortality.

ELAP also provides emergency assistance to eligible producers of livestock and farm-raised fish including for feed and grazing losses. It covers losses because of eligible adverse weather or loss

conditions, including blizzards and wildfires on federally managed lands. ELAP also covers losses resulting from the cost of transporting water to livestock due to an eligible drought.

For more information on ELAP visit [farmers.gov/recover](https://farmers.gov/recover) or contact your FSA County Office. To locate your local FSA office, visit [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator).

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## USDA Offers New Crop Insurance Pilot Program for Nursery Crops in 2021

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Risk Management Agency (RMA) announced a new crop insurance pilot program, Nursery Value Select (NVS), for crop year 2021. NVS is another crop insurance option for nursery crop producers, including those growing hemp, in addition to the Nursery crop insurance program.

NVS is available in select counties in Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Michigan, New Jersey, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas and Washington to persons operating nurseries that meet certain criteria. The deadline to purchase NVS insurance, or the Sales Closing Date, is May 1, 2020, for Alabama, Florida, New Jersey and Texas and September 1, 2020, for Colorado, Michigan, Oregon, Tennessee and Washington.

NVS was developed with input from nursery producers. The pilot program is based on the existing Nursery crop insurance program, with these changes:

- Simplification of the application and annual policy renewal process;
- Allowing nursery producers to select the dollar amount of coverage that best fits their risk management needs, and for buy-up policies; coverage tailored by an individual practice (container or field grown) or by choosing from any of 10 potential plant categories;
- A simplified loss adjustment process that uses a more accurate approach to determining plant values by placing greater reliance on the nursery producer's actual sales receipts, along with increased producer participation in determining damaged plants' ability to be marketed or rehabilitated;
- Elimination of a plant list based on third-party software and greater reliance on the producer's inventory records, along with plant category naming conventions more familiar to the nursery industry;
- Tailored program dates that are better suited to the agronomic and industry nursery management practices in different regions across the country; and
- A new Occurrence Loss Option (OLO), moving the deductible from a unit level to a plant level for an additional premium (only available for buy-up policies).

USDA has also announced an insurance coverage option for hemp growers for the 2020 crop year, including through Whole Farm Revenue Protection and the Multi-Peril Crop Insurance pilot. Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the [RMA Agent Locator](https://www.rma.usda.gov/Topics/Nursery). Learn more about NVS at: [www.rma.usda.gov/Topics/Nursery](https://www.rma.usda.gov/Topics/Nursery).

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## Direct Loans

FSA offers direct farm ownership and direct farm operating Loans to producers who want to establish, maintain or strengthen their farm or ranch. FSA loan officers process, approve and service direct loans.

Direct farm operating loans can be used to purchase livestock and feed, farm equipment, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance and other costs including family living expenses. Operating loans can also be

used to finance minor improvements or repairs to buildings and to refinance some farm-related debts, excluding real estate.

Direct farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, enlarge an existing farm, construct and repair buildings, and to make farm improvements.

The maximum loan amount for direct farm ownership loans is \$600,000 and the maximum loan amount for direct operating loans is \$400,000 and a down payment is not required. 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.

Please contact your local FSA office for more information or to apply for a direct farm ownership or operating loan. To locate your local FSA office, visit [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator).

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