

April 2018



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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South Carolina Farm Service Agency Newsletter

South Carolina Farm Service Agency

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Boone Peeler

State Committee:
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Robert Battle
Bill Sarratt
Landy Weathers
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A Special 2018 Earth Day Message from Boone Peeler, State Executive Director, South Carolina Farm Service Agency

America's farmers and ranchers are the original stewards of the Earth. You understand the fragility of the land and work tirelessly to sustain and protect it to ensure its availability for generations to come.

The 2012 United States Census of Agriculture counted 3.2 million American farmers, ranchers and foresters. That's over 3 million responsible landowners and caretakers continuously looking for new and sustainable operating practices to help preserve our natural resources, while supporting an ever-growing population.

Your use of precision agriculture technologies, along with other conservation practices, help protect drinking water and reduce soil erosion. Your efforts also help preserve and restore wildlife

Acting Administrative Officer:

Kenn Jameson

Farm Programs Chief:

Amy Turner

Farm Loan Programs Chief:

William Shelley

Producers can contact their [local FSA Office](#) for more information or to schedule an appointment.

Important Dates and Deadlines:

May 15: Acreage Reporting Deadline for Tomatoes (planted 3/15 - 4/30).

May 28: Offices Closed for Memorial Day

habitats, forests and wetlands. The world relies on your stewardship for our well-being and recreation.

As we celebrate Earth Day on April 22, on behalf of the South Carolina Farm Service Agency, I want to thank you for your role in taking care of the land, and ensuring the air we breathe and the water we drink is safe and clean.

To help you along the way, FSA is here to support South Carolina agriculturalists through our many programs and services as you invest in your operations and protect our natural resources.

For more information, visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

Sincerely,

Boone S. Peeler
State Executive Director
South Carolina Farm Service Agency

Still Time to be Counted in the 2017 Census of Agriculture

NASS to follow-up with producers who have not yet responded

Farmers and ranchers still have time to be counted in the 2017 Census of Agriculture, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). Although the first deadline has just passed, NASS will continue to accept Census information through the spring to get a complete and accurate picture of American agriculture that represents all farmers and ranchers.

Federal law mandates that everyone who received the 2017 Census of Agriculture questionnaire complete it and return it even if not currently farming. NASS will continue to follow-up with producers through the spring with mailings, phone calls, and personal visits. To avoid these additional contacts, farmers and ranchers are encouraged to complete their Census either online at www.agcounts.usda.gov or by mail as soon as possible. Responding online saves time by skipping sections that do not apply and automatically calculating totals. The online questionnaire is accessible on desktops, laptops, and mobile devices.

For more information about the 2017 Census of Agriculture, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov. For questions or assistance filling out the Census, call toll-free (888) 424-7828.

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 both direct farm ownership and operating loans is \$300,000 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.

Report Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) Losses

The Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory, or prevented planting occur due to natural disasters.

Eligible producers must have purchased NAP coverage for 2018 crops. A notice of loss must be filed the earlier of 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent or 15 days of the final harvest date.

Eligible crops must be commercially produced agricultural commodities for which crop insurance is not 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 of hand-harvested crops must notify FSA of damage or loss through the administrative County Office within 72 hours of the date of damage or loss first becomes apparent. This notification can be provided by filing a CCC-576, email, fax or phone. Producers who notify the County Office by any method other than by filing the CCC-576 are still required to file a CCC-576, Notice of Loss, within the required 15 calendar days

For more information on NAP, contact your local FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov/nap.

USDA to Immediately Assist Producers for Qualifying Livestock, Honeybee and Farm-raised Fish Program Losses

\$34 Million in Payments for 2017 Losses Part of Broad Suite of Programs Aiding Ag Operations

USDA will issue \$34 million to help agricultural producers recover from 2017 natural disasters through the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program](#) (ELAP), which covers losses not covered by certain other USDA disaster assistance programs. These payments are being made available today, and they are part of a broader USDA effort to help producers recover from hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria, wildfires and drought. A large portion of this assistance will be made available in [federally designated disaster areas](#).

ELAP aims to help eligible producers of livestock, honeybees and farm-raised fish for losses due to disease, certain adverse weather events or loss conditions, including blizzards and wildfires, as determined by the Secretary. ELAP assistance is provided for losses not covered by other disaster assistance programs such as the [Livestock Forage Disaster Program \(LFP\)](#) and the [Livestock Indemnity Program \(LIP\)](#).

The increased amount of assistance through ELAP was made possible by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, signed earlier this year. The Act amended the 2014 Farm Bill to enable USDA's [Farm Service Agency](#) (FSA) to provide assistance to producers without an annual funding cap and immediately for 2017. It also enables FSA to pay ELAP applications as they are filed for 2018 and subsequent program years.

Other USDA Disaster Assistance Programs

The Act removed program year payment limitations and increased the acreage cap for the [Tree Assistance Program](#) (TAP), a nationwide program that provides owners of orchards, vineyards and

nurseries with cost share assistance to replant eligible trees, bushes, and vines following a natural disaster. For example, the program will help owners of citrus groves in Florida, avocado trees in California, coffee plantations in Puerto Rico and vineyards reduce the cost of replanting, and speed recovery from the loss of fruit and nut trees, bushes, and vines.

Prior to the Act, there was a combined program year payment limitation of \$125,000 for ELAP, LIP and LFP per person or legal entity. The Tree Assistance Program (TAP) had its own \$125,000 payment limitation. The Act removed the program year per person and legal entity payment limitation for LIP and TAP. As a result of the Act, a \$125,000 per person and legal entity single payment limitation applies to the total amount of program year payments received under both ELAP and the [Livestock Forage Disaster Program](#) (LFP) and program payments under LIP and TAP no longer have payment limits.

Under the updated program, as amended by the Act, growers are eligible to be partly reimbursed for losses on up to 1,000 acres per program year, double the previous acreage limit of 500 acres.

In total, it is estimated that the Act will enable USDA to provide more than \$3 billion in disaster assistance, including the \$2.36 billion announced last week to be made available through FSA's new 2017 Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program. This includes \$400 million made available for the [Emergency Conservation Program](#), which helps farmers and ranchers repair damage to farmlands caused by natural disasters. As signups across the country are completed, additional applications will be funded.

According to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the United States was impacted by 16 separate billion-dollar disaster events in 2017 including: three tropical cyclones, eight severe storms, two inland floods, a crop freeze, drought and wildfire. More than 25 million people – almost eight percent of the population – were affected by major disasters. From severe flooding in Puerto Rico and Texas to mudslides and wildfires in California, major natural disasters caused catastrophic damages, with an economic impact totaling more than \$300 billion.

For Assistance

Producers with operations impacted by natural disasters and diseases in 2018 are encouraged to contact their [local USDA service center](#) to apply for assistance through ELAP, TAP, LIP and LFP. Producers with 2017 ELAP claims need to take no action as FSA will begin paying those claims today.

Guaranteed Loan Program

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.

Please contact your lender or local FSA farm loan office for more information on guaranteed loans.

USDA Implements up to \$2.36 Billion to Help Agricultural Producers Recover after 2017 Hurricanes and Wildfires

'2017 Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program' to Aid Recovery in Rural Communities

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will make disaster payments of up to \$2.36 billion, as provided by Congress, to help America's farmers and ranchers recover from hurricanes and wildfires. The funds are available as part of the new 2017 Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program (2017 WHIP). Sign-up for the new program, authorized by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, will begin no later than July 16.

USDA's [Farm Service Agency](#) (FSA) will make these disaster payments to agricultural producers to offset losses from hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria and devastating wildfires. The 2017 calendar year was a historic year for natural disasters, and this investment is part of a broader suite of programs that USDA is delivering to rural America to aid recovery. In total, the Act provided more than \$3 billion in disaster relief by creating new programs, and expediting or enhancing payments for producers.

About 2017 WHIP Disaster Payments

The new 2017 WHIP will provide significant disaster assistance and be guided by the following principles:

- Eligibility will be limited to producers in counties that experienced hurricanes or wildfires designated as presidentially-declared disasters in 2017;
- Compensation determined by a producer's individual losses rather than an average of losses for a particular area (where data is available);
- Producers who purchased higher levels of risk protection, such as crop insurance and noninsured crop disaster assistance program, will receive higher payments;
- Advance payments up to 50 percent; and
- A requirement that payment recipients obtain future risk protection.

Other USDA Disaster Assistance

WHIP disaster payments are being issued in addition to payments through our traditional programs, some of which obtained increased funding or had amendments made by the Act to make the programs more responsive, including the [Emergency Conservation Program](#), [Emergency Watershed Protection Program](#), [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program](#), [Tree Assistance Program](#) and [Livestock Indemnity Program](#).

During 2017, the U.S. experienced a historic year of weather-related disasters, with an economic impact totaling more than \$300 billion. In total, the United States was impacted by 16 separate billion-dollar disaster events including: three tropical cyclones, eight severe storms, two inland floods, a crop freeze, drought and wildfire. More than 25 million people – almost eight percent of the population – were affected by major disasters.

More Information

FSA will distribute more information on how producers can file claims for WHIP disaster payments at a later date. For questions on how to establish farm records to be prepared when WHIP disaster signup begins, or to learn about other disaster assistance programs, producers are asked to contact their [local USDA service center](#).

Farm Storage Facility Loans

FSA's Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program provides low-interest financing to producers to build or upgrade storage facilities and to purchase portable (new or used) structures, equipment and storage and handling trucks.

The low-interest funds can be used to build or upgrade permanent facilities to store commodities. Eligible commodities include corn, grain sorghum, rice, soybeans, oats, peanuts, wheat, barley, minor oilseeds harvested as whole grain, pulse crops (lentils, chickpeas and dry peas), hay, honey, renewable biomass, fruits, nuts and vegetables for cold storage facilities, floriculture, hops, maple sap, rye, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, meat and poultry (unprocessed), eggs, and aquaculture (excluding systems that maintain live animals through uptake and discharge of water). Qualified facilities include grain bins, hay barns and cold storage facilities for eligible commodities.

Loans up to \$50,000 can be secured by a promissory note/security agreement and loans between \$50,000 and \$100,000 may require additional security. Loans exceeding \$100,000 require additional security.

Producers do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply. The loans are designed to assist a diverse range of farming operations, including small and mid-sized businesses, new farmers, operations supplying local food and farmers markets, non-traditional farm products, and underserved producers.

To learn more about the FSA Farm Storage Facility Loan, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport or contact your local FSA county office. To find your local FSA county office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Livestock Inventory Records

Producers are reminded to keep updated livestock inventory records. These records are necessary in the event of a natural disaster.

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.

Producers should record all pertinent information regarding livestock inventory records including:

- Documentation of the number, kind, type, and weight range of livestock
- Beginning inventory supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts;

For more information on documentation requirements, contact your local FSA office.

USDA Announces \$8.4 Million to Support Veterans and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Office of Partnerships & Public Engagement (OPPE) today announced up to \$8.4 million in available funding for training and technical assistance for socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers. Funding is made through the USDA's Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program (also known as the 2501 Program).

The 2501 Program was originally authorized by the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990. 2501 grants seek to enhance the equitable participation of socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers in USDA resources and programs, such as Farm Service Agency loans or grants through the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP). Projects may focus on conferences, training sessions, educational materials, or new programs to help these farmers and ranchers thrive and succeed.

Eligible applicants include community-based organizations, networks, or coalitions of community-based organizations; 1890 or 1994 institutions of higher education; American Indian tribal community colleges or Alaska Native cooperative colleges; Hispanic-serving institutions of higher education; other higher education institutions; Indian Tribes or national tribal organizations. Eligible entities must have experience in providing agricultural education or other agricultural-related services for socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers.

The deadline for applications is May 15, 2018. See the [request for applications](#) for full details. Learn more about this funding opportunity through a teleconference on April 25, 2018 at 2:00 p.m. EST. To join the session, call 1-888-455-1685 and use passcode 7087935.

Examples of FY 2017 funded 2501 projects include a grant to the National Hmong American Farmers, Inc., to provide technical and direct assistance to Hmong farmers in central California who face barriers to successful farming due to poverty and cultural and linguistic isolation. A Florida State University project reached veterans with workshops, online agricultural courses, and 15 farm apprenticeships and managerial apprenticeships at private farms.

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).