

August 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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State Executive Director:
Boone Peeler

State Committee:
Anthony Grant, Chairperson
Robert Battle
Bill Sarratt
Landy Weathers
Beth White

A Message from the State Executive Director

It's August, so that means my favorite season (football) is right around the corner. It's also severe weather season, and if you have the misfortune of experiencing ag-related damages due to hurricanes, tornadoes, hail, wind, flooding or other conditions, please report those to your county office as soon as possible. We use these reports to accumulate damage information that could be used to gain a Secretarial Disaster Designation.

Our offices are working hard to provide the most effective, efficient, and most customer-focused service of any Federal agency. The next time you find yourself sitting across the counter or desk from a South Carolina FSA employee, please tell them "thanks" for all they

Administrative Officer:
Kenn Jameson

do. As you'll see in the articles below, we have several things keeping us busy.

Farm Programs Chief:
Amy Turner

Have a great month and stay safe.
--Boone Peeler

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:

September 1: NAP
Application Closing Date for
Flowers, Mollusks, Grass for
Sod

September 3: Offices Closed
for Labor Day

September 30: NAP
Application Closing Date for
Small Grains (not covered by
crop insurance)

Supervised Credit

Farm Service Agency (FSA) Farm Loan programs are considered supervised credit. Unlike loans from a commercial lender, FSA loans are intended to be temporary in nature. Therefore, it is our goal to help you graduate to commercial credit, and our farm loan staff is available to help borrowers through training and credit counseling.

The FSA team will help borrowers identify their goals to ensure financial success. Through this process, FSA staff will advise borrowers in developing strategies and a plan to meet your operation's goals and graduate to commercial credit. Ultimately, the borrower is responsible for the success of the farming operation, but FSA's staff will help in an advisory role to provide the tools necessary to help you achieve your operational goals and manage your finances.

For more information on FSA farm loan programs, visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

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. 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>.

USDA Encourages Producers to Consider NAP Risk Protection Coverage before Crop Sales Deadlines

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 deadline.

Producers are reminded that crops not covered by insurance may be eligible for NAP. Beginning, underserved and limited resource farmers are now eligible for free catastrophic level coverage.

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://webapp.rma.usda.gov/apps/ActuarialInformationBrowser2018/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.

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 Center 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/#>. Producers can use the USDA Cost Estimator, <https://ewebapp.rma.usda.gov/apps/costestimator/Default.aspx>, to predict insurance premium costs.

FSA Offers Joint Financing Option on Direct Farm Ownership Loans

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 and 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 nonfarm 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.

For more information about FSA Loan programs, contact your local FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov. To find your local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Perdue Announces Additional Hurricane and Wildfire Recovery Details

Under the direction of President Donald J. Trump, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue today announced new details on eligibility for a new U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) disaster program, [2017 Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program](#) (2017 WHIP). In total, USDA's [Farm Service Agency](#) (FSA) will deploy the up to \$2.36 billion that Congress appropriated through the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 to help producers with recovery of their agricultural operations in at least nine states with hurricane damage and states impacted by wildfire. Following the announcement, Secretary Perdue issued this statement:

"Last year our nation experienced some of the most significant disasters we have seen in decades, some back-to-back, at the most critical time in their production year. While USDA has a suite of disaster programs as well as crop insurance available to help producers manage their risk, Congress felt it was important to provide extra assistance to our nation's farms and ranches that were the hardest hit last year," Secretary Perdue said. "At President Trump's direction, our team is working as quickly as possible to make this new program available to farmers in need. Our aim is to provide excellent customer service, building on efforts which began the day the storm hit."

Key Updates Include:

- **Hurricane Recovery:** To be eligible a crop, tree, bush or vine must be located in a primary disaster county with either a Presidential declaration or a Secretarial designation due to a 2017 hurricane. Crops, trees, bushes or vines located in other counties may also be eligible if the producer provides documentation the loss was caused by a 2017 hurricane.
- **Wildfire Recovery:** Any crop, tree, bush or vine, damaged by a 2017 wildfire is eligible.
- **Eligible Producers:** Eligibility will be determined on an individual basis, using the level of insurance coverage purchased for 2017 for the total crop acres on the area for which the WHIP application is made. Eligible producers who certify to an average adjusted gross income (AGI) of at least 75 percent derived from farming or ranching, including other agriculture and forestry-based businesses during the tax years 2013, 2014 and 2015, will be eligible for a \$900,000 payment limitation with verification. All other eligible producers requesting 2017 WHIP benefits will be subject to a \$125,000 payment limitation.
- **Crop Insurance Requirement:** Both insured and uninsured producers are eligible to apply for WHIP. However, all producers opting to receive 2017 WHIP payments will be required to purchase crop insurance at the 60% coverage level, or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) at the 60% buy up coverage level if crop insurance is not available. Coverage must be in place for the next two applicable crop years to meet program requirements.
- **Acreage Reporting Requirements:** In addition, for the applicable crop years, all producers are required to file an acreage report and report production (if applicable).
- **Payment Formula:** FSA will calculate WHIP payments with this formula:

Payment = Expected Value of the Crop x WHIP Factor - Value of Crop Harvested - Insurance Indemnity

The WHIP factor ranges from 65 percent to 95 percent. Producers who did not insure their crops in 2017 will receive a 65 percent WHIP Factor. Insured producers, or producers who had NAP, will receive between 70 percent and 95 percent WHIP Factors; those purchasing higher levels of coverage will receive higher WHIP Factors.

Other USDA Disaster Assistance:

Drought, wildfires and other disasters continue to impact farmers and ranchers, and 2017 WHIP is just one of many programs available through USDA to help with recovery. From crop insurance to on-the-ground rehabilitation programs like the [Emergency Conservation Program \(ECP\)](#) and [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#), USDA is here to help. The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 provided funding for ECP and the [Emergency Watershed Protection Program](#). The [Act also provided amendments](#) to make programs like the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program, Tree Assistance Program and Livestock Indemnity Program even more responsive.

More Information:

The sign-up for 2017 WHIP began on July 16. Additional information on WHIP is available on [FSA's 2017 WHIP webpage](#). For immediate assistance under any of our other disaster programs, please contact a [local USDA service center](#) or learn more at www.fsa.usda.gov/disaster.

MAL and LDP Policy

The Agricultural Act of 2014 authorized 2014-2018 crop year Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs), with a few minor policy changes.

Among the changes, farm-stored MAL collateral transferred to warehouse storage will retain the original loan rate, be allowed to transfer only the outstanding farm-stored quantity with no additional quantity allowed and will no longer require producers to have a paid for measurement service when moving or commingling loan collateral.

MALs and LDPs provide financing and marketing assistance for wheat, 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 a loan, but agrees to forgo the loan, may obtain an LDP if such a payment is available. Marketing loan provisions and LDPs are not available for sugar and extra-long staple cotton.

FSA is now accepting requests for 2018 MALs and LDPs for all eligible commodities after harvest. Requests for loans and LDPs shall be made on or before the final availability date for the respective commodities.

Before MAL repayments with a market loan gain or LDP disbursements can be made, producers must meet the requirements of actively engaged in farming, cash rent tenant and member contribution.

Commodity certificates are available to loan holders who have outstanding nonrecourse loans for wheat, upland cotton, rice, feed grains, pulse crops (dry peas, lentils, large and small chickpeas), peanuts, wool, soybeans and designated minor oilseeds. These certificates can be purchased at the posted county price (or adjusted world price or national posted price) for the quantity of commodity under loan, and must be immediately exchanged for the collateral, satisfying the loan. MALs redeemed with commodity certificates are not subject to the actively engaged in farming, cash-rent tenant, Adjusted Gross Income provisions or the payment limitation.

To be considered eligible for an LDP, producers must have form [CCC-633EZ](#), Page 1 on file at their local FSA Office before losing beneficial interest in the crop. Pages 2, 3 or 4 of the form must be submitted when payment is requested.

The 2014 Farm Bill also establishes payment limitations per individual or entity not to exceed \$125,000 annually on certain commodities for the following program benefits: price loss coverage payments, agriculture risk coverage payments, marketing loan gains (MLGs) and LDPs. These payment limitations do not apply to MAL loan disbursements or redemptions using commodity certificate exchange.

Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) provisions were modified by the 2014 Farm Bill, which states that a producer whose total applicable three-year average AGI exceeds \$900,000 is not eligible to receive

an MLG or LDP. Producers must have a valid CCC-941 on file to earn a market gain of LDP. The AGI does not apply to MALs redeemed with commodity certificate exchange.

For more information and additional eligibility requirements, please visit a nearby USDA Service Center or FSA's website www.fsa.usda.gov.

USDA Resumes Continuous Conservation Reserve Program Enrollment

One-Year Extension Available to Holders of Many Expiring Contracts through Continuous Signup

As part of a 33-year effort to protect sensitive lands and improve water quality and wildlife habitat on private lands, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will resume accepting applications for the voluntary [Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\)](#). Eligible farmers, ranchers, and private landowners can sign up at their local [Farm Service Agency \(FSA\)](#) office between June 4 and Aug. 17, 2018.

FSA stopped accepting applications last fall for the CRP continuous signup (excluding applications for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and CRP grasslands). This pause allowed USDA to review available acres and avoid exceeding the 24 million-acre CRP cap set by the 2014 Farm Bill. New limited practice availability and short sign up period helps ensure that landowners with the most sensitive acreage will enroll in the program and avoid unintended competition with new and beginning farmers seeking leases. CRP enrollment currently is about 22.7 million acres.

2018 Signup for CRP

For this year's signup, limited priority practices are available for continuous enrollment. They include grassed waterways, filter strips, riparian buffers, wetland restoration and others. [View a full list of practices](#).

FSA will use updated soil rental rates to make annual rental payments, reflecting current values. It will not offer incentive payments as part of the new signup.

USDA will not open a general signup this year, however, a one-year extension will be offered to existing CRP participants with expiring CRP contracts of 14 years or less. Producers eligible for an extension will receive a letter with more information.

CRP Grasslands

Additionally, FSA established new [ranking criteria](#) for [CRP Grasslands](#). To guarantee all CRP grasslands offers are treated equally, applicants who previously applied will be asked to reapply using the new ranking criteria. Producers with pending applications will receive a letter providing the options.

About CRP

In return for enrolling land in CRP, USDA, through FSA on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), provides participants with annual rental payments and cost-share assistance. Landowners enter into contracts that last between 10 and 15 years. CRP pays producers who remove sensitive lands from production and plant certain grasses, shrubs and trees that improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and increase wildlife habitat.

The new changes to CRP do not impact the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, a related program offered by CCC and state partners.

Producers wanting to apply for the CRP continuous signup or CRP grasslands should contact their USDA service center. To locate your local FSA office, visit <https://www.farmers.gov>. More information on CRP can be found at www.fsa.usda.gov/crp.

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.

CRP Participants Must Maintain Approved Cover on Acreages Enrolled in CRP and Farm Programs

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) participants are responsible for ensuring adequate, approved vegetative and practice cover is maintained to control erosion throughout the life of the contract after the practice has been established. Participants must also control undesirable vegetation, weeds (including noxious weeds), insects and rodents that may pose a threat to existing cover or adversely impact other landowners in the area.

All CRP maintenance activities, such as mowing, burning, disking and spraying, must be conducted outside the primary nesting or brood rearing season for wildlife, which for South Carolina is April 1 through September 1. However, spot treatment of the acreage may be allowed during the primary nesting or brood rearing season if, left untreated, the weeds, insects or undesirable species would adversely impact the approved cover. In this instance, spot treatment is limited to the affected areas in the field and requires County Committee approval prior to beginning the spot treatment. The County Committee will consult with NRCS to determine if such activities are needed to maintain the approved cover.

Annual mowing of CRP for generic weed control, or for cosmetic purposes, is prohibited at all times.

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).