

October 2018



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

GovDelivery

Having trouble viewing this email? [View it as a Web page.](#)

- [USDA Offers Secure, Convenient Online Business Options](#)
- [Emergency Conservation Program Assistance Available in 6 South Carolina Counties](#)
- [USDA Issues Safety-Net and Conservation Payments to South Carolina Farmers](#)
- [Environmental Review Required Before Project Implementation](#)
- [Nearly \\$2 Billion Now Available for Eligible Producers Affected by 2017 Hurricanes and Wildfires](#)
- [USDA Encourages Producers to Consider NAP Risk Protection Coverage before Crop Sales Deadlines](#)
- [Emergency Disaster Declarations and Designations](#)
- [USDA Enrollment Period for Safety Net Coverage in 2018](#)
- [Farm Reconstitutions](#)
- [Mark your calendar for January 23 & 24 for the 7th Annual SC AgriBiz & Farm Expo](#)

Topics for October

South Carolina Farm Service Agency

1927 Thurmond Mall, Suite
100
Columbia, SC 29201
Phone: 803.806.3820

www.fsa.usda.gov/sc

State Executive Director:
Boone Peeler

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

USDA Offers Secure, Convenient Online Business Options

Farmers, Ranchers and Foresters Encouraged to Sign-In/Sign-Up

Farmers, ranchers and agricultural producers in South Carolina have new online options to access U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs. Through USDA's new streamlined process producers can now register, track and manage their applications for the Market Facilitation Program (MFP) and 2017 Wildfires Hurricanes Indemnity Program (2017 WHIP) on the secure and convenient <https://www.farmers.gov/sign-in>.

MFP and 2017 WHIP are administered by FSA and are currently available on the <https://www.farmers.gov/sign-in>. To apply and manage their applications online, producers first need to sign up for the *Level 2 eAuthentication* access. Enrolling is a two-step process. For producers who do not already have an account can register for an account at www.eauth.usda.gov. After creating the account, customers receive a confirmation email with instructions for identity verification. Identity verification can be completed online or by

Administrative Officer:
Kenn Jameson

presenting a government issued photo ID in person at a USDA service center.

Farm Programs Chief:
Amy Turner

In addition to the programs available through the farmers.gov portal, other programs offered by FSA can be managed at the [Online Services page](#) with the same eAuthentication credentials.

Farm Loan Programs Chief:
William Shelley

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

Individual producers have many options available for conducting business online with USDA agencies including FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Risk Management Agency (RMA). Online tools such as the NRCS [Conservation Client Gateway](#) offer customers added flexibility and a secure web portal to track payments, report completed practices, request assistance, and sign documents. Level 2 eAuthentication access is not yet available for entities, but it is available for individuals.

Important Dates and Deadlines:

To learn more about conducting business with USDA online and to locate the nearest USDA service center, visit www.farmers.gov.

November 12: Offices closed for Veterans Day

November 20: NAP Application Closing Date for Alfalfa, Apples, Blueberries, Caneberries, Figs, Grapes, Grass - All perennial grasses for forage and/or grazing, Honey, Kiwifruit, Lespedeza, Mixed Forage, Nectarines, Peaches (not covered by FCIC), Pears, Pecans, Plums

Emergency Conservation Program Assistance Available in 6 South Carolina Counties

The Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) provides emergency funding and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters and to implement emergency water conservation measures in periods of severe drought.

November 22: Offices closed for Thanksgiving

The following counties are eligible for ECP assistance: Chesterfield, Dillon, Horry, Lee, Marion, and Marlboro.

For land to be eligible, the natural disaster must create new conservation problems that, if untreated, would:

- be so costly to rehabilitate that Federal assistance is or will be needed to return the land to productive agricultural use
- is unusual and is not the type that would recur frequently in the same area
- affect the productive capacity of the farmland
- impair or endanger the land

A producer qualifying for ECP assistance may receive cost-share levels not to exceed 75 percent of the eligible cost of restoration measures. No producer is eligible for more than \$200,000 cost sharing per natural disaster occurrence. The following types of measures may be eligible:

- removing debris from farmland
- grading, shaping, or releveling severely damaged farmland
- restoring permanent fences
- restoring conservation structures and other similar installations

Producers who suffered a loss from a natural disaster should contact their local FSA Office. The ECP Signup Deadline is December 13, 2018.

To be eligible for assistance, practices must not be started until all of the following are met:

- an application for cost-share assistance has been filed
- the local FSA County Committee (COC) or its representative has conducted an onsite

- inspection of the damaged area
- the Agency responsible for technical assistance, such as the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), has made a needs determination, which may include cubic yards of earthmoving, etc., required for rehabilitation

For more information about ECP, please visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

USDA Issues Safety-Net and Conservation Payments to South Carolina Farmers

USDA State Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that approximately \$18 million will be paid to South Carolina farms that enrolled in Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) for 2017 market downturns. Additionally, South Carolina FSA will distribute \$2.4 million in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) rental payments to landowners for their commitment to conservation stewardship.

PLC payments have triggered for 2017 barley, canola, corn, grain sorghum, wheat and other crops. In the next few months payments will be triggered for rice, chickpeas, sunflower seeds, flaxseed, mustard seed, rapeseed, safflower, crambe, and sesame seed. Producers with bases enrolled in ARC for 2017 crops can visit www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc for updated crop yields, prices, revenue and payment rates. In South Carolina, 44 counties have experienced a drop in price and/or revenues below the benchmark price established by the ARC or PLC programs and will receive payments.

ARC and PLC payments by county can vary because average county yields will differ.

Also, this week, USDA will begin issuing 2018 CRP payments to support voluntary conservation efforts on private lands. In South Carolina, 2300 landowners will receive compensation for their efforts to improve water quality, reduce soil erosion and improve wildlife habitat.

For more information about USDA programs or to locate the nearest USDA Service Center, visit www.farmers.gov.

Environmental Review Required Before Project Implementation

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires Federal agencies to consider all potential environmental impacts for federally-funded projects before the project is approved.

For all Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs, an environmental review must be completed before actions are approved, such as site preparation or ground disturbance. These programs include, but are not limited to, the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program and farm loans. If project implementation begins before FSA has completed an environmental review, this will result in a denial of the request. There are exceptions regarding the Stafford Act and emergencies. It is important to wait until you receive written approval of your project proposal before starting any actions, including, but not limited to, vegetation clearing, site preparation or ground disturbance.

Remember to contact your local FSA office early in your planning process to determine what level of environmental review is required for your program application so that it can be completed timely.

Applications cannot be approved contingent upon the completion of an environmental review. FSA must have copies of all permits and plans before an application can be approved.

Nearly \$2 Billion Now Available for Eligible Producers Affected by 2017 Hurricanes and Wildfires

Agricultural producers affected by hurricanes and wildfires in 2017 now may apply for assistance to help recover and rebuild their farming operations. Signup begins July 16, 2018, and continues through Nov. 16, 2018.

Hurricanes and wildfires caused billions of dollars in losses to America's farmers last year. Our objective is to get relief funds into the hands of eligible producers as quickly as possible. We are making immediate, initial payments of up to 50 percent of the calculated assistance so producers can pay their bills.

Additional payments will be issued, if funds remain available, later in the year.

The program, known as the 2017 Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program (2017 WHIP) was authorized by Congress earlier this year by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018.

Eligible crops, trees, bushes, or vines, located in a county declared in a Presidential Emergency Disaster Declaration or Secretarial Disaster Designation as a primary county are eligible for assistance if the producer suffered a loss as a result of a 2017 hurricane. Also, losses located in a county not designated as a primary county may be eligible if the producer provides documentation showing that the loss was due to a hurricane or wildfire in 2017. A list of counties that received qualifying hurricane declarations and designations is available at <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/disaster-assistance-program/wildfires-and-hurricanes-indemnity-program/index>. Eligibility is determined by Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees.

Agricultural production losses due to conditions caused by last year's wildfires and hurricanes, including excessive rain, high winds, flooding, mudslides, fire, and heavy smoke, could qualify for assistance through the program. Typically, 2017 WHIP is only designed to provide assistance for production losses, however, if quality was taken into consideration under the insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy, where production was further adjusted, the adjusted production will be used in calculating assistance under this program.

Eligible crops include those for which federal crop insurance or NAP coverage is available, excluding crops intended for grazing. A list of crops covered by crop insurance is available through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Actuarial Information Browser at <https://webapp.rma.usda.gov/apps/actuarialinformationbrowser>.

Eligibility will be determined for each producer based on the size of the loss and the level of insurance coverage elected by the producer. A WHIP factor will be determined for each crop based on the producer's coverage level. Producers who elected higher coverage levels will receive a higher WHIP factor.

The 2017 WHIP payment factor ranges from 65 percent to 95 percent, depending upon the level of crop insurance coverage or NAP coverage that a producer obtained for the crop. Producers who did not insure their crops in 2017 will receive 65 percent of the expected value of the crop. Insured producers will receive between 70 percent and 95 percent of expected value; those who purchased the highest levels of coverage will receive 95-percent coverage.

Each eligible producer requesting 2017 WHIP benefits will be subject to a payment limitation of either \$125,000 or \$900,000, depending upon their average adjusted gross income, which will be verified. The payment limit is \$125,000 if less than 75 percent of the person or legal entity's average adjusted gross income is average adjusted gross farm income. The payment limit is \$900,000, if 75 percent or more of the average adjusted gross income of the person or legal entity is average adjusted gross farm income.

Both insured and uninsured producers are eligible to apply for 2017 WHIP. However, all producers receiving 2017 WHIP payments will be required to purchase crop insurance and/or NAP, at the 60

percent coverage level or higher, for the next two available crop years to meet statutory requirements. Producers who fail to purchase crop insurance for the next two applicable years will be required to pay back the 2017 WHIP payment.

To help expedite payments, a producer who does not have records established at the [local USDA service center](#) are encouraged to do so early in the process. To establish a record for a farm, a producer needs:

- Proof of identity: driver's license and Social Security number/card;
- Copy of recorder deed, survey plat, rental, or lease agreement of the land. A producer does not have to own property to participate in FSA programs;
- Corporation, estate, or trust documents, if applicable

Once signup begins, a producer will be asked to provide verifiable and reliable production records. If a producer is unable to provide production records, USDA will calculate the yield based on the county average yield. A producer with this information on file does not need to provide the information again.

For more information on FSA disaster assistance programs, please contact your local USDA service center or visit <https://www.farmers.gov/recover/whip>.

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

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

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/ActuarialInformationBrowser2019/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 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/#>. Producers can use the USDA Cost Estimator, <https://ewebapp.rma.usda.gov/apps/costestimator/Default.aspx>, to predict insurance premium costs.

Emergency Disaster Declarations and Designations

Farmers and ranchers know all too well that natural disasters can be a common, and likely a costly, variable to their operation. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has emergency assistance programs to

provide assistance when disasters strike, and for some of those programs, a disaster designation may be the eligibility trigger. When natural disaster occurs, there is a process for requesting a USDA Secretarial disaster designation for a county. Agricultural producers can play a vital role in this process.

If you have experienced a production loss as a result of a natural disaster you may submit a request to your local FSA county office for your county to be evaluated for a Secretarial disaster designation. Once a request is received, the county office will collect disaster data and create a Loss Assessment Report. The County Emergency Board will review the Loss Assessment Report and determine if a recommendation is sent forward to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture for the designation.

For more information on FSA disaster programs and disaster designations, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/disaster.

USDA Enrollment Period for Safety Net Coverage in 2018

Farmers and ranchers with generic base acres in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) safety net program still have time to enroll for the 2018 crop year. Producers with generic base acres have until **Dec. 7, 2018**, to allocate generic base acres, update yields, make a program election for seed cotton base acres and enroll farms that formerly contained generic base acres.

Since shares and ownership of a farm can change year-to-year, producers must enroll by signing a contract each program year.

The producers on a farm that are not enrolled for the 2018 enrollment period will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs for the 2018 crop should crop prices or farm revenues fall below the historical price or revenue benchmarks established by the program. Producers who made their elections in previous years must still enroll during the 2018 enrollment period.

The ARC and PLC programs were authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill and offer a safety net to agricultural producers when there is a substantial drop in prices or revenues for covered commodities. 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 and sweet rice), safflower seed, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed, wheat and upland cotton. For more details regarding these programs, go to www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.

For more information, producers are encouraged to visit their local FSA office. To find a local FSA office, visit <https://www.farmers.gov/>.

Farm Reconstitutions

When changes in farm ownership or operation take place, a farm reconstitution is necessary. The reconstitution — or recon — is the process of combining or dividing farms or tracts of land based on the farming operation.

To be effective for the current Fiscal Year (FY), farm combinations and farm divisions must be requested by **August 1 of the FY** for farms subject to the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program. A reconstitution is considered to be requested when all:

- of the required signatures are on FSA-155
- other applicable documentation, such as proof of ownership, is submitted.

Total Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and non-ARC/PLC farms may be reconstituted at any time.

The following are the different methods used when doing a farm recon:

Estate Method — the division of bases, allotments and quotas for a parent farm among heirs in settling an estate;

Designation of Landowner 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 this 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;

DCP Cropland Method — the division of bases in the same proportion that the DCP cropland for each resulting tract relates to the DCP cropland on the parent tract;

Default Method — the division of bases for a parent farm with each tract maintaining the bases attributed to the tract level when the reconstitution is initiated in the system.

Mark your calendar for January 23 & 24 for the 7th Annual SC AgriBiz & Farm Expo

Make plans to attend the 7th Annual SC AgriBiz & Farm Expo at the remodeled Florence Center, in Florence, South Carolina. The event will be held Wednesday, January 23 and Thursday, January 24, 2019. Each attendee will be admitted, free of charge.

The expo will include an impressive array of exhibitors from businesses, associations and government agencies involved with the farming communities in South Carolina. With a schedule packed with informative and educational speakers, the Expo offers something for everyone. Also, as always, the Taste of SC, the Commissioners Breakfast and the Farmers Breakfast are highlights of the Expo, which everyone enjoys.

There will be educational tracks for: Field Crops, Fruit & Vegetable producers, Women in Agriculture and Youth involved in agriculture. New this year will be educational opportunities for forestry and timber owners, as well as beef and other animal owners. You don't want to miss learning about "Your Forest Land may be a Hidden Jewel on Your Farm!"; "Hemp Industry Update" and how to manage "Goat and Free Range Chickens." In addition, there will be a CAMM educational class providing 1.5 hours of credit focusing on "Crop Utilization of Manure Nutrients and Soil Fertility."

Returning this year Kevin Matthew of Matthews Farm will continue to expand your knowledge of how to produce increased corn yields with "Amazing Corn Yields 102". If you missed this outstanding presentation last year, make sure you attend in 2019 to catch up and learn even more.

Mark your calendars and we look forward to seeing you January 23 and 24, 2019 at the 7th Annual SC AgriBiz & Farm Expo. For more information visit us on the web at scagribizexpo.com.

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).