

June 2019



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Topics for June

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

After one of the wettest winters I can remember, I would have never thought we would reach drought conditions throughout much of South Carolina but here we are.

I am thankful for the rain we have received over the last few weeks. It has certainly helped with forages and pastures, and allowed many of you to resume planting soybeans, cotton, and peanuts. Unfortunately, the rain came too late to save dryland corn in many areas of our state. For those of you who were impacted by this extreme weather, we have loan programs and other assistance programs available that may be a tool to assist. Please contact your local FSA office for more information.

Stay safe and please let me know if I can help you in any way.

Administrative Officer:

Kenn Jameson

USDA Announces New Decision Tool for New Dairy Margin Coverage Program

Farm Programs Chief:

Amy Turner

USDA announced the availability of a new [web-based tool](#) – developed in partnership with the University of Wisconsin – to help dairy producers evaluate various scenarios using different coverage levels through the new [Dairy Margin Coverage](#) (DMC) program.

Farm Loan Programs Chief:

William Shelley

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

The 2018 Farm Bill authorized DMC, a voluntary risk management program that offers financial protection to dairy producers when the difference between the all milk price and the average feed cost (the margin) falls below a certain dollar amount selected by the producer. It replaces the program previously known as the Margin Protection Program for Dairy. Sign up for this USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) program opens on June 17.

Important Dates and Deadlines:

July 4, 2019 – Offices Closed for Independence Day

The University of Wisconsin launched the decision support tool in cooperation with FSA and funded through a cooperative agreement with the USDA Office of the Chief Economist. The tool was designed to help producers determine the level of coverage under a variety of conditions that will provide them with the strongest financial safety net. It allows farmers to simplify their coverage level selection by combining operation data and other key variables to calculate coverage needs based on price projections.

August 1, 2019 – 2020 NAP Application Closing Date – Strawberries, Onions

The decision tool assists producers with calculating total premiums costs and administrative fees associated with participation in DMC. It also forecasts payments that will be made during the coverage year.

For more information, access the tool at fsa.usda.gov/dmc-tool. For DMC sign up, eligibility and related program information, visit fsa.usda.gov or contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

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.

Double-Cropping

Each year, state committees will review and approve or disapprove county committee recommended changes or additions to specific combinations of crops.

Double-cropping is approved when the two specific crops have the capability to be planted and carried to maturity for the intended use, as reported by the producer, on the same acreage within a crop year under normal growing conditions. The specific combination of crops recommended by the county committee must be approved by the state committee.

Double-cropping is approved in South Carolina on a county-by-county basis. Contact your local FSA Office for a list of approved double-cropping combinations for your county.

A crop following a cover crop terminated according to termination guidelines is approved double cropping and these combinations do not have to be approved by the state committee.

Eligibility for Nominations for the 2019 County Committee Elections

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA and allow grassroots input and local administration of federal farm programs.

Committees are comprised of locally elected agricultural producers responsible for the fair and equitable administration of FSA farm programs in their counties. Committee members are accountable to the Secretary of Agriculture. If elected, members become part of a local decision making and farm program delivery process.

A county committee is composed of three to 11 elected members from local administrative areas (LAA). Each member serves a three-year term. To be eligible for nomination and hold office as a committee member or alternate, a person must fulfill each of the following requirements: (1) be a producer with an interest in farming or ranching operations, (2) participate or cooperate in any FSA program provided for by law, (3) be a U.S. citizen, (4) be of legal voting age, (5) meet the basic eligibility requirements, and (6) reside in the county or multi-county jurisdiction in which they will be serving.

All nomination forms for the 2019 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA service center by Aug. 1, 2019. For more information on FSA county committee elections and appointments, refer to the FSA fact sheet: *Eligibility to Vote and Hold Office as a COC Member* available online at: fsa.usda.gov/elections.

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 Reopens Continuous CRP Signup

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will accept applications beginning June 3, 2019, for certain practices under the continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) signup and will offer extensions for expiring CRP contracts. The 2018 Farm Bill reauthorized CRP, one of the country's largest conservation programs.

FSA stopped accepting applications last fall for the continuous CRP signup when 2014 Farm Bill authority expired. Since passage of the 2018 Farm Bill last December, Fordyce said FSA has carefully analyzed the language and determined that a limited signup prioritizing water-quality practices furthers conservation goals and makes sense for producers as FSA works to fully implement the program.

Continuous CRP Signup

This year's signup will include such practices as grassed waterways, filter strips, riparian buffers, wetland restoration and others. [View a full list of practices approved for this program.](#)

Continuous signup enrollment contracts are 10 to 15 years in duration. Soil rental rates will be set at 90 percent of the existing rates. Incentive payments will not be offered for these contracts.

Other CRP Signup Options

FSA will open a CRP general signup in December 2019 and a CRP Grasslands signup later.

CRP Contract Extensions

A one-year extension will be offered to existing CRP participants who have expiring CRP contracts of 14 years or less. Producers eligible for an extension will receive a letter describing their options.

Alternatively, producers with expiring contracts may have the option to enroll in the Transition Incentives Program, which provides two additional annual rental payments on the condition the land is sold or rented to a beginning farmer or rancher or a member of a socially disadvantaged group.

More Information

Producers interested in applying for continuous CRP practices, or who need an extension, should contact their USDA service center beginning June 3. To locate your local FSA office, visit www.farmers.gov. More information on CRP can be found at www.fsa.usda.gov/crp.

Storage and Handling Trucks Eligible for Farm Storage Facility Loans

Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFL) provide low-interest financing so producers can build or upgrade facilities to store commodities. Some storage and handling trucks are eligible for the FSFL. These include:

- **Cold Storage Trucks**-A van or truck designed to carry perishable freight at specific temperatures. Cold storage trucks can be ice-cooled or equipped with any variety of mechanical refrigeration systems.
- **Flatbed Trucks**-Truck with an open body in the form of a platform with no side walls for easy loading and unloading. These trucks can be categorized into different sizes which range from light, medium, or heavy duty, compact or full-size, or short and expandable beds.
- **Grain Trucks**-A piece of farm equipment specially made to accommodate grain products and are traditionally truck chassis units with a mounted grain “dump” body where grain commodities are transported from a field to either a grain elevator or a storage bin.
- **Storage Trucks with a Chassis Unit**-Commonly referred to as a box truck, box van or straight truck, is a truck with a cargo body mounted on the same chassis with the engine and cab.

To be eligible for FSFL, the storage and handling truck must be less than 15 years old and have a maximum of four axles with a gross weight rating of 60,000 pounds or less. Pick-up trucks, semi-trucks, dump trucks, and simple insulated and ventilated vans are ineligible for FSFL.

FSFL for storage and handling trucks must be \$100,000 or less. FSFL-financed storage and handling trucks must be used for the purpose for which they were acquired for the entire FSFL term.

Eligible commodities include grains, oilseeds, pulse crops, hay, honey, renewable biomass commodities, fruits and vegetables, floriculture, hops, maple sap, milk, cheese, yogurt, butter, eggs, meat/poultry (unprocessed), rye and aquaculture.

For more information or to apply for a FSFL, contact your local [FSA Service Center](#).

USDA Accepting Applications 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.

Report Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) Losses

The Noninsured 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 including freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive wind or hurricanes, flood, excessive heat and qualifying drought (includes native grass for grazing), among others.

Eligible producers must have purchased NAP coverage for 2019 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.

Producers of hand-harvested crops and certain perishable crops must notify FSA within 72 hours of when a loss becomes apparent.

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.

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

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).