A Message from State Executive Director Wendy Wilton

It’s another spring with tough conditions, but we’re still making progress on planting, despite the rain.

Our Vermont FSA offices will be extremely busy for the next couple of months, with acreage reporting and sign-up for the new Dairy Margin Coverage program. A recent press release from USDA announcing the sign up for DMC starting June 17 explains that USDA revised margins downward to the advantage of the producer. The revised margins for 2019 so far are: January, $7.71, February, $7.91, March, $8.66 and April $8.82. This means payments have been triggered every month so far this year for producers that elect higher levels of coverage.

Our FSA office are able to help you analyze your many options under DMC with the tools available both on the USDA website and through the University of Wisconsin. Please call ahead to your local FSA office to make an appointment so we can prepare for your visit.
To find contact information for your local office go to www.fsa.usda.gov/vt.

USDA is expected to announce another round of Market Facilitation Program (MFP) to offset trade impacts. FSA is also accepting applications for certain practices under continuous CRP and CREP.

Your local FSA offices are continuing to hire program technicians, farm loan trainees, and county office trainees. Watch for email alerts about openings in your area.

Many Thanks for all you do for Vermont agriculture,

Wendy L. Wilton
Vermont State Executive Director

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**Dates to Remember**

**June 3, 2019**: Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Continuous Signup reopens.

**June 17, 2019**: Dairy Margin Coverage Program signup begins.

**June 15 - August 1, 2019**: County Committee Election nomination period for Local Administrative Area up for election. Individuals can nominate themselves or others.

**July 15, 2019**: Acreage Reporting Deadline for spring-seeded crops, including forage seeding, crops intended for cover, green manure, or left standing, and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres.

**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.

**Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Signup**

FSA will also reopen signup for existing Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) agreements. Fact sheets on current CREP agreements are available on [this webpage](#).

**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, including those under existing CREP agreements, or who need an extension, should contact their USDA service center beginning June 3. To locate your local FSA office, visit [www.farmers.gov](http://www.farmers.gov). More information on CRP can be found at [www.fsa.usda.gov/crp](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/crp).

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**Nominations Open for the 2019 County Committee Elections**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) encourages all farmers, ranchers, and FSA program participants to take part in their County Committee election nomination process.

FSA’s 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. One-third of the seats on these committees are open for election each year.

County committees may have an appointed advisor to further represent the local interests of underserved farmers and ranchers. Underserved producers are beginning, women and other minority farmers and ranchers and landowners and/or operators who have limited resources.
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.

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**USDA Fruit, Vegetable and Wild Rice Planting Rules Unchanged from Previous Farm Bill**

Farm Service Agency (FSA) has announced fruit, vegetable and wild rice provisions that affect producers who intend to participate in certain programs authorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014 as amended by the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018.

Producers who intend to participate in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs are subject to an acre-for-acre payment reduction when fruits and nuts, vegetables or wild rice are planted on the payment acres of a farm. Payment reductions do not apply to mung beans, dry peas, lentils or chickpeas. Planting fruits, vegetables or wild rice on acres that are not considered payment acres will not result in a payment reduction. Farms that are eligible to participate in ARC/PLC but are not enrolled for a particular year may plant unlimited fruits, vegetables and wild rice for that year but will not receive ARC/PLC payments for that year. Eligibility for succeeding years is not affected.

Planting and harvesting fruits, vegetables and wild rice on ARC/PLC acreage is subject to the acre-for-acre payment reduction when those crops are planted on more than 15 percent of the base acres of a farm enrolled in ARC using the county coverage or PLC, or more than 35 percent of the base acres of a farm enrolled in ARC using the individual coverage.

Fruits, vegetables and wild rice that are planted in a double-cropping practice will not cause a payment reduction if the farm is in a double-cropping region as designated by the USDA’s Commodity Credit Corporation.

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**Malted Grains and Maple Syrup Eligible for Farm Storage Facility Loans**

Malted small grains and maple syrup are now eligible for Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFL) through the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

FSFLs provide 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 eligible commodities have been expanded to include malted small grains and maple syrup. Eligible malted small grains include barley, oats, rice, rye and wheat. Maple sap is used to produce maple syrup.

The low-interest funds can be used for:

- bottler or filling systems for maple syrup, excluding containers
- equipment to improve, maintain, or monitor the quality of stored FSFL commodities, such as cleaners, moisture testers, heat detectors, along with a proposed storage facility
• handling and drying equipment determined by the County Committee to be needed and essential to the proper functioning of a storage system
• electrical equipment, such as pumps, lighting, motors, and wiring, integral to the proper operation of the storage and handling equipment, excluding installing electric service to the electrical meter.

FSFLs are not available for the actual processing of the small grain into the malted commodity or maple sap into maple syrup. Additionally, purchased commodities are not eligible for FSFLs.

The following storage and handling equipment is ineligible for FSFLs:

• boiling equipment
• feed handling and processing equipment
• production and feed facilities
• structures of a temporary nature not having a useful life of the term of the loan
• maple sap tubing and pumping systems.

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](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport) or contact your local FSA office.

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**Maintaining Good Credit History**

Farm Service Agency (FSA) Farm Loan programs require that applicants have a satisfactory credit history. A credit report is requested for all FSA direct farm loan applicants. These reports are reviewed to verify outstanding debts, if bills are paid timely and to determine the impact on cash flow.

Information found on a customer’s credit report is strictly confidential and is used only as an aid in conducting FSA business.

Our farm loan staff will discuss options with you if you have an unfavorable credit report and will provide a copy of your report. If you dispute the accuracy of the information on the credit report, it is up to you to contact the issuing credit report company to resolve any errors or inaccuracies.

There are multiple ways to remedy an unfavorable credit score.

• Make sure to pay bills on time. Setting up automatic payments or automated reminders can be an effective way to remember payment due dates.
• Pay down existing debt.
• Keep your credit card balances low.
• Avoid suddenly opening or closing existing credit accounts.

FSA’s farm loan staff will guide you through the process, which may require you to reapply for a loan after improving or correcting your credit report.

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

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### Selected Interest Rates for June 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loan Type</th>
<th>Current Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm Ownership</td>
<td>3.875%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Ownership - Down Payment</td>
<td>1.500%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Ownership - Joint Financing</td>
<td>2.500%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Operating</td>
<td>3.250%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emergency - Amount of Actual Loss</td>
<td>3.750%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Storage Facility Loan - 3-Year Term</td>
<td>2.250%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Storage Facility Loan - 5-Year Term</td>
<td>2.250%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Storage Facility Loan - 7-Year Term</td>
<td>2.375%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Storage Facility Loan - 10-Year Term</td>
<td>2.500%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farm Storage Facility Loan - 12-Year Term</td>
<td>2.500%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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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).