

June 2020



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

# NEWSLETTER

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## Virginia FSA State Newsletter

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**Farm Service Agency  
Virginia State Office**

**Nivin A. Elgohary**  
State Executive Director

1606 Santa Rosa Rd  
Suite 138  
Richmond, VA 23229

### State Executive Director Message

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Like many Americans, Virginia farm families are facing tough times right now due to the ongoing pandemic. We hope you're staying safe and healthy and want you to know we are making every effort to provide much needed support as quickly as possible. FSA employees are hard at work meeting with new producers, answering your questions, accepting and approving applications and making program payments.

804-287-1503  
855-621-5866 fax

**Hours**

Monday - Friday  
7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

**State Office Staff**

Pete Adamson  
Chief Farm Loans

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Specialist

To find contact information for  
your local office go to  
[www.fsa.usda.gov/xx](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/xx)

The Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) is available for producers facing financial hardship in these difficult times. Signups began on May 26, 2020 with applications accepted through August 28, 2020. CFAP is not a first come first served program but is structured to ensure the availability of funding for all eligible producers who apply. Applicants will receive 80 percent of their maximum total payment upon approval of the application. The remainder will be paid at a later date but cannot exceed the funding limit.

To get started, simply download the CFAP application and other eligibility forms from [farmers.gov/CFAP](http://farmers.gov/CFAP). Make sure to have your inventory and sales or production documentation available when you visit the county office to help streamline the application process.

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## ARCPLC Enrollment Deadline June 30 for Key Farm Safety-Net Programs

Producers signed a record 1.77 million contracts for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for the 2019 crop year, which is more than 107 percent of the total contracts signed compared with a 5-year average. USDA also reminds producers that June 30 is the deadline to enroll in ARC and PLC for the 2020 crop year.

Producers interested in enrolling for 2020 should contact their FSA county office. Producers must enroll by June 30 and make their one-time update to PLC payment yields by September 30.

FSA attributes the significant participation in the 2019 crop year ARC and PLC programs to increased producer interest in the programs under the 2018 Farm Bill and to an increase in eligible farms because of the selling and buying of farms and new opportunities for beginning farmers and military veterans with farms having 10 or fewer base acres. Enrollment for 2019 ended March 16.

USDA Service Centers, including FSA county offices, are open for business by phone only, and field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. While program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with producers by phone and using online tools whenever possible. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other Service Center agency are required to call their

Service Center to schedule a phone appointment. More information can be found at [farmers.gov/coronavirus](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus).

For more information on ARC and PLC, download our [program fact sheet](#) or our [2014-2018 farm bills comparison fact sheet](#). Online ARC and PLC election decision tools are available at [fsa.usda.gov/arc/plc](https://fsa.usda.gov/arc/plc). To enroll, contact your [FSA county office](#) for an appointment.

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## Wetland Compliance Made Easy

Wetland conservation has been an integral part of Virginia agriculture for more than 30 years but can still pose challenges for landowners who must balance good stewardship with a desire to make full use of their crop and pasture lands. About three quarters of the state's one million acres of wetlands are nontidal and may only hold water temporarily, making them difficult to identify. Yet, growers must certify that they have not produced crops on converted wetlands and that they did not convert a wetland to make agriculture production possible to maintain eligibility for Farm Bill programs. NRCS is available to help landowners navigate the somewhat complex process of wetland identification and certification.

As part of an ongoing effort to improve our customer experience, the NRCS has recently redesigned the national and state Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELCS) and Wetland Conservation (WC) web pages to more effectively deliver complete, consistent and transparent technical information to our clients. This [online reference](#) includes technical resources, **county/city HEL soils lists and a roster of agency experts who possess the requisite training, knowledge, skills, and abilities to issue technical determinations and decisions.** We encourage you to visit the revised Virginia webpage to learn more about USDA requirements for conservation compliance.

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## Farmers and Ranchers in Virginia Can Now Apply for Financial Assistance through USDA's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program

*Online Tools and Toll-Free Number Available to Assist Producers*

Agricultural producers can now apply for USDA's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), which provides direct payments to offset impacts from the coronavirus pandemic. The application and a payment calculator are now available online, and USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) staff members are available via phone, fax and online tools to help producers complete applications. The agency set up a call center in order to simplify how they serve new customers across the nation.

Applications will be accepted through August 28, 2020. Through CFAP, USDA is making available \$16 billion for vital financial assistance to producers of agricultural commodities who have suffered a five-percent-or-greater price decline due to COVID-19 and face additional significant marketing costs as a result of lower demand, surplus production, and disruptions to shipping patterns and the orderly marketing of commodities.

We also want to remind producers that the program is structured to ensure the availability of funding for all eligible producers who apply.

In order to do this, producers will receive 80 percent of their maximum total payment upon approval of the application. The remaining portion of the payment, not to exceed the payment limit, will be paid at a later date nationwide, as funds remain available.

Producers can download the CFAP application and other eligibility forms from [farmers.gov/cfap](https://farmers.gov/cfap). Also, on that webpage, producers can find a payment calculator to help identify sales and inventory records needed to apply and calculate potential payments.

Additionally, producers in search of one-on-one support with the CFAP application process can call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance. This is a good first step before a producer engages the team at the FSA county office at their local USDA Service Center.

### **Applying for Assistance**

Producers of all eligible commodities will apply through their local FSA office. Those who use the online calculator tool will be able to print off a pre-filled CFAP application, sign, and submit to your local FSA office either electronically or via hand delivery. Please contact your local office to determine the preferred method. Find contact information for your local office at [farmers.gov/cfap](https://farmers.gov/cfap).

Documentation to support the producer's application and certification may be requested after the application is filed. FSA has streamlined the signup process to not require an acreage report at the time of application and a USDA farm number may not be immediately needed.

### **Additional Commodities**

USDA is also establishing a process for the public to identify additional commodities for potential inclusion in CFAP. Specifically, USDA is looking for data on agricultural commodities, that are not currently eligible for CFAP, that the public believes to have either:

1. suffered a five percent-or-greater price decline between mid-January and mid-April as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic,
2. shipped but subsequently spoiled due to loss of marketing channel, or
3. not left the farm or remained unharvested as mature crops.

More information about this process is available on [farmers.gov/cfap](https://farmers.gov/cfap).

### **More Information**

To find the latest information on CFAP, visit [farmers.gov/cfap](https://farmers.gov/cfap) or call 877-508-8364.

USDA Service Centers are open for business by phone appointment only, and field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. While program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with producers by phone and using online tools whenever possible. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, or any other Service Center agency are required to call their Service Center to schedule a phone appointment. More information can be found at [farmers.gov/coronavirus](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus).

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## **FSA Reminds Producers of Ongoing Disaster Assistance Program Signup**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has started making payments through the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program – Plus (WHIP+) to agricultural producers who suffered eligible losses because of drought or excess moisture in 2018 and 2019. Signup for these causes of loss opened March 23, and producers who suffered losses from drought (in counties designated D3 or above), excess moisture, hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, typhoons, volcanic activity, snowstorms or wildfires can still apply for assistance through WHIP+.

To be eligible for WHIP+, producers must have suffered losses of certain crops, trees, bushes or vines in counties with a Presidential Emergency Disaster Declaration or a Secretarial Disaster Designation (primary counties only) for qualifying natural disaster events that occurred in calendar years 2018 or 2019. Also, losses located in a county not designated by the Secretary as a primary county may be eligible if a producer provides documentation showing that the loss was due to a qualifying natural disaster event.

For losses due to drought, a producer is eligible if any area of the county in which the loss occurred was rated D3, or extreme drought, or higher on the U.S. Drought Monitor during calendar years 2018 or 2019. Producers who suffered losses should contact their FSA county office.

In addition to the recently added eligible losses of drought and excess moisture, FSA will implement a WHIP+ provision for crop quality loss that resulted in price deductions or penalties when marketing crops damaged by eligible disaster events. To ensure an effective program for all impacted farmers, the Agency is currently gathering information on the extent of quality loss from producers and stakeholder organizations.

USDA Service Centers, including FSA county offices, are open for business by phone only, and field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. While program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with producers by phone and using online tools whenever possible. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other Service Center agency are required to call their Service Center to schedule a phone appointment. More information on Service Centers can be found at [farmers.gov/coronavirus](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus), and more information on WHIP+ can be found at [farmers.gov/whip-plus](https://farmers.gov/whip-plus).

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## USDA Acreage Reporting Deadline July 15

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) has established July 15, 2020 as the crop reporting deadline for hay/pasture (acreage not enrolled in NAP), corn, cotton, cover crop, CRP, grain sorghum, peanuts, soybeans, tobacco, and vegetables and cover crops.

Timely and accurate acreage reports for all crops and land uses, including prevented planting or failed acreage, are the foundation for many FSA program benefits, including disaster programs for livestock owners. Producers must report their acreage to maintain program eligibility.

Producers who have coverage for crops under the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) must report their crop acreage by the earlier of any of the following:

- the established acreage reporting date for the crop,
- 15 calendar days before the onset of harvest or grazing of the specific crop acreage being reported,

- the established normal harvest date for the end of the coverage period.

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## Reporting Organic Crops

Producers who want to use the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) organic price and selected the "organic" option on their NAP application must report their crops as organic.

When certifying organic acres, the buffer zone acreage must be included in the organic acreage.

Producers must also provide a current organic plan, organic certificate or documentation from a certifying agent indicating an organic plan is in effect. Documentation must include:

- name of certified individuals
- address
- telephone number
- effective date of certification
- certificate number
- list of commodities certified
- name and address of certifying agent
- a map showing the specific location of each field of certified organic, including the buffer zone acreage

Certification exemptions are available for producers whose annual gross agricultural income from organic sales totals \$5,000 or less. Although exempt growers are not required to provide a written certificate, they are still required to provide a map showing the specific location of each field of certified organic, transitional and buffer zone acreage.

For questions about reporting organic crops, contact your local FSA office. To find your local office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

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## CRP Continuous Enrollment Period

The Farm Service Agency is accepting offers for specific conservation practices under the [Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\) Continuous Signup](#).

CRP is a voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive agricultural land is devoted to conservation benefits. CRP participants establish long-term, resource-conserving vegetative species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as "covers"), to control soil erosion, improve the water quality and enhance wildlife habitat. In return, FSA provides participants with annual rental payments and cost-share assistance. Continuous signup enrollment contracts are 10 to 15 years in duration.

Under continuous CRP signup, environmentally sensitive land devoted to certain conservation practices can be enrolled in CRP at any time. Offers are automatically accepted provided the land and producer meet certain eligibility requirements and the enrollment levels do not exceed the statutory cap.

Unlike CRP enrollments under general CRP signups or CRP Grasslands, offers for continuous enrollment are not subject to competitive bidding during specific periods.

For more information, including a list of acceptable practices, visit [fsa.usda.gov/crp](https://fsa.usda.gov/crp).

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## New Farmers.gov Feature Helps Producers Find Farm Loans that Fit Their Operation

A new online tool can help farmers and ranchers find information on U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) farm loans that may best fit their operations. USDA has launched the new *Farm Loan Discovery Tool* as the newest feature on farmers.gov, the Department's self-service website for farmers.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers a variety of loan options to help farmers finance their operations. From buying land to financing the purchase of equipment, FSA loans can help. Compared to this time last year, FSA has seen an 18 percent increase in the amount it has obligated for direct farm ownership loans, and through the 2018 Farm Bill, has [increased the limits](#) for several loan products.

USDA conducted field research in eight states, gathering input from farmers and FSA farm loan staff to better understand their needs and challenges.

### How the Tool Works

Farmers who are looking for financing options to operate a farm or buy land can answer a few simple questions about what they are looking to fund and how much money they need to borrow. After submitting their answers, farmers will be provided information on farm loans that best fit their specific needs. The loan application and additional resources also will be provided.

Farmers can download application quick guides that outline what to expect from preparing an application to receiving a loan decision. There are four guides that cover loans to individuals, entities, and youth, as well as information on microloans. The guides include general eligibility requirements and a list of required forms and documentation for each type of loan. These guides can help farmers prepare before their first USDA service center visit with a loan officer.

Farmers can access the *Farm Loan Discovery Tool* by visiting [farmers.gov/fund](https://farmers.gov/fund) and clicking the "Start" button. Follow the prompts and answer five simple questions to receive loan information that is applicable to your agricultural operation. The tool is built to run on any modern browser like Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or the Safari browser, and is fully functional on mobile devices. It does not work in Internet Explorer.

### About Farmers.gov

In 2018, USDA unveiled farmers.gov, a dynamic, mobile-friendly public website combined with an authenticated portal where farmers will be able to apply for programs, process transactions, and manage accounts.

The *Farm Loan Discovery Tool* is one of many resources on farmers.gov to help connect farmers to information that can help their operations. Earlier this year, USDA launched the *My Financial*

*Information* feature, which enables farmers to view their loan information, history, payments, and alerts by logging into the website.

USDA is building farmers.gov for farmers, by farmers. In addition to the interactive farm loan features, the site also offers a Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool. Farmers can visit [farmers.gov/recover/disaster-assistance-tool#step-1](https://farmers.gov/recover/disaster-assistance-tool#step-1) to find disaster assistance programs that can help their operation recover from natural disasters.

With feedback from customers and field employees who serve those customers, farmers.gov delivers farmer-focused features through an agile, iterative process to deliver the greatest immediate value to America's agricultural producers – helping farmers and ranchers do right, and feed everyone.

For more information or to locate your USDA Service Center, visit [farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov).

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## Communication is Key in Lending

Farm Service Agency (FSA) is committed to providing our farm loan borrowers the tools necessary to be a success. A part of ensuring this success is providing guidance and counsel from the loan application process through the borrower's graduation to commercial lending institutions. While it is FSA's commitment to advise borrowers as they identify goals and evaluate progress, it is crucial for borrowers to communicate with their farm loan staff when changes occur. It is the borrower's responsibility to alert FSA to any of the following:

- Any proposed or significant changes in the farming operation;
- Any significant changes to family income or expenses;
- The development of problem situations;
- Any losses or proposed significant changes in securit

In addition, if a farm loan borrower cannot make payments to suppliers, other creditors, or FSA on time, contact your farm loan staff immediately to discuss loan servicing options.

For more information on FSA farm loan programs, visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

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## Selected Interest Rates for June 2020

90-Day Treasury Bill	0.125%
Farm Operating Loans — Direct	1.375%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct	2.250%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	2.50%
Emergency Loans	2.375%
Farm Storage Facility Loans - (3 years)	0.250%



Farm Storage Facility Loans - (5 years)	0.375%
Farm Storage Facility Loans - (7 years)	0.500%
Farm Storage Facility Loans - (10 years)	0.625%
Farm Storage Facility Loans - (12 years)	0.750%
Commodity Loans 1996-Present	1.125%

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## Dates to Remember

- Jun. 30 Deadline to enroll your farms in 2020 ARCPLC at your local FSA County Office.
- Jul. 15 2020 acreage reporting deadline for hay/pasture (acreage not enrolled in NAP), corn, cotton, cover crop, CRP, grain sorghum, peanuts, soybeans, tobacco vegetables and cover crops to your local FSA County Office.
- Aug. 28 Deadline to apply for CFAP at your local FSA Office.
- Cont. Producers of hand-harvested crops and certain perishable crops with a 2020 NAP coverage must notify FSA within 72 hours of when a loss becomes apparent and within 72 hours after harvest is complete for the hand harvested crop to your local FSA County Office.
- Cont. Submit your AD-1026 prior to forest land being cleared for agricultural use and new ground (hay and pasture) to be planted to a row crop or vegetable.
- Cont. Now is the time to plan your 2020 on farm grain, hay or cold storage needs. Consider FSFL for your storage needs. Contact your local FSA Office for more details.

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For more information on bulletin subjects or details regarding your GovDelivery subscription with the Virginia FSA State Office, contact Diane Lenoir-Giles at [diane.lenoir-giles@usda.gov](mailto:diane.lenoir-giles@usda.gov) or call at 804-287-1537.

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