

May 2017



Farm Service Agency

**GovDelivery** Electronic  
News Service



**NEWSLETTER**

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

- [Operators in Joint Operations Have June 1 Deadline](#)
- [Preserve Good Credit History](#)
- [Commodity Loan and Loan Deficiency Payment Deadline Approaches](#)
- [FSA Encourages Responding to Upcoming NASS Surveys](#)
- [Census of Agriculture Countdown Begins for America's Farmers and Ranchers](#)
- [CRP Contracts Require Mid-Contract Management](#)
- [Primary Nesting Season Influences CRP Maintenance](#)
- [Crop Acreage Reporting Follows Spring Planting](#)
- [Acreage Reporting Guidelines for Organic Crops](#)
- [Acreage Reporting Guidelines for Cover Crops](#)
- [Enrollment Period for 2017 Safety Net Coverage Continues Through August 1](#)
- [Important Dates and Deadlines](#)

---

## Washington State FSA Newsletter

---

### Washington State Farm Service Agency

316 W. Boone Ave., Ste  
568 Spokane, WA 99201

Phone: 509-323-3000  
Fax: 855-843-1172

[www.fsa.usda.gov/wa](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/wa)

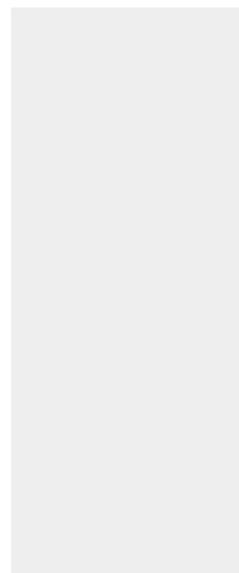
**State Executive Director:**  
Vacant

**State Committee:**  
Don Olmstead, Jr., Chair  
Larry Dehaan, Member

### Operators in Joint Operations Have June 1 Deadline

All joint operations (general partnerships and joint ventures) comprised of non-family members need to report any changes or revisions to your 2017 farm operating structure to your local FSA office by **June 1, 2017**. Changes need to be submitted in writing by the deadline to ensure program payments. There are no exceptions or extensions.

"Actively engaged" rules impact eligibility for Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, as well as loan



Jesus Limon, Member  
Sheryl Hagen-Zakarison,  
Member

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

deficiency payments and market loan gains  
obtained through Marketing Assistance Loans.

The 2014 Farm Bill provided the Secretary of Agriculture with the direction and authority to amend the “Actively Engaged” in farming rules related to management. The final rule established limits on the number of individuals who can qualify as actively engaged using only management. Only one payment limit for management is allowed under the rule, with the ability to request up to two additional qualifying managers for large and complex operations.

The revised management contribution rule does not apply to farming operations comprised entirely of family members. Family members are defined as a great grandparent, grandparent, parent, child, including legally adopted children and stepchildren, grandchild, great grandchild, or a spouse or sibling of family members.

The rule also does not change the existing regulations related to contributions of land, capital, equipment or labor, or the existing regulations related to landowners with a risk in the crop or to spouses.

Most non-family joint operations will only be eligible to qualify one member as actively engaged based on their management contributions. They may qualify up to two additional members based on management contributions if the farming operation meets certain size and complexity requirements. The size requirement is based on marketing crops from 2,500 acres of cropland or more. The complexity criteria looks at the number and type of crops and livestock produced, other ag products produced, marketing channels used and the geographical area covered by the operation.

While only a limited number of farming operations are expected to be subject to this limitation on management contributions, you should contact your [county FSA office](#) if you have any questions about whether it applies to you. You can also find more information about payment eligibility and payment limitations at FSA’s online [fact sheet](#).

---

**Preserve 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 and to verify your history of paying your debts timely. This information is strictly confidential and is used only as an aid in processing FSA loan applications.

FSA's professional farm loan staff can discuss options with you if you have an unfavorable credit 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 several ways to improve your credit history.

- 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](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

---

## Commodity Loan and Loan Deficiency Payment Deadline Approaches

Time is running out to request a marketing assistance loan (MAL) or loan deficiency payment (LDP) for your 2016 crop of corn, pulse crops (dry peas, lentils, chickpeas), mustard seed, safflower seed, sunflower seed, soybeans, grain sorghum and rice stored in an approved storage facility on the farm or in a warehouse. The deadline to request a loan or LDP for these crops is May 31, 2017.

MALs (otherwise known as commodity loans) are a marketing tool that enables you to obtain an influx of cash for operating expenses, using the stored crop as loan collateral. This allows you to delay sale of your crop until more favorable marketing conditions emerge.

LDPs are a direct payment made in lieu of a commodity loan, and are available when the Commodity Credit Corporation determined value (lesser of the 30-day or 5-day average terminal market price for the crop adjusted for differentials and market adjustments) falls below the county

loan rate. To be eligible for an LDP, you must have form CCC-633EZ Page 1 on file at your local county office before you lose beneficial interest in your crop.

National and county loan rates can be found [here](#). Daily LDP rates can be found [here](#). To inquire about commodity loans or LDPs, contact your local [county FSA office](#).

---

## **FSA Encourages Responding to Upcoming NASS Surveys**

Agricultural statistics are important for many reasons - marketing purposes, promoting agriculture and even as data used in Farm Service Agency programs. Having accurate data helps FSA administer programs fairly and equitably. For this reason, FSA encourages you to respond to upcoming USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) surveys. NASS will be conducting several major acreage and livestock surveys during May and the first half of June.

You may be contacted by an enumerator gathering information for these surveys. NASS contracts with enumerators who work for the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture to follow-up with farmers and ranchers for survey data. The individual reports you share are strictly confidential and cannot be used by other government agencies. Information FSA, and other agencies, receive from NASS is aggregate data.

If you have questions about NASS surveys, you may contact the Regional NASS office at [nassfonwr@nass.usda.gov](mailto:nassfonwr@nass.usda.gov) or call (800) 435-5883.

---

## **Census of Agriculture Countdown Begins for America's Farmers and Ranchers**

America's farmers and ranchers will soon have the opportunity to strongly represent agriculture in their communities and industry by taking part in the 2017 Census of Agriculture. Conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the census, to be mailed at the end of this year, is a complete count of all U.S. farms, ranches, and those who operate them.

The Census of Agriculture highlights land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures, and other topics. The 2012 Census of Agriculture revealed that over three million farmers operated more than two million farms, spanning over 914 million acres. This was a four percent decrease in the number of U.S. farms from the previous census in 2007. However, agriculture sales, income, and expenses increased between 2007 and 2012. This telling information and thousands of other agriculture statistics are a direct result of responses to the Census of Agriculture.

Producers who are new to farming or did not receive a Census of Agriculture in 2012 still have time to sign up to receive the 2017 Census of Agriculture report form by visiting [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov) and clicking on the 'Make Sure You Are Counted' button through June. NASS defines a farm as any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year (2017).

---

## **CRP Contracts Require Mid-Contract Management**

Conservation Reserve Program contract holders are required to do mid-contract management approximately in year six of a 10-year CRP contract to maintain the health of the CRP stand. This can be spraying, mowing, light tillage, burning, etc. Refer to your contract or contact your [county FSA office](#) to check the requirements of your contract.

It is a good idea to periodically inspect your CRP for weeds or stand deterioration. You are responsible to establish the stand you agreed to in your CRP offer and maintain it throughout the contract period. Remember, a CRP problem discovered by an FSA inspection rather than you can result in payment reductions or even contract termination. Prevent this situation by maintaining a healthy CRP stand.

---

## Primary Nesting Season Influences CRP Maintenance

The primary nesting season for Washington is April 1 through July 1. During this time period, prior approval by the County Committee is required to treat weeds by mowing, burning, or spraying on contracts that have received final stand certification. Treatment must be limited to areas that have weed problems. Treatment of entire fields for cosmetic purposes is not allowed.

Outside the nesting period, you are allowed to perform treatment without any prior approval from FSA.

Activities such as harrowing or chopping of dried mustards and Russian thistle after the nesting period has ended can be a valuable tool to keep these weeds from getting on your neighbor's property. They also help maintain grass vigor and ensure that you have a viable cover for the entire CRP contract period. Fifty percent cost-sharing is available if these activities are approved by FSA before work begins.

Remember that these rules only apply to contracts where the cover is considered established. This generally happens 1-2 years after planting. If your stand is not considered established, you may, and are contractually required to, perform any weed control activities necessary at any time of the year as called for in your conservation plan. Failure of your stand due to lack of weed control may lead to payment reductions or contract termination. Contact your [county FSA office](#) if you have any questions regarding CRP maintenance.

---

## Crop Acreage Reporting Follows Spring Planting

If you are planting spring crops, you are encouraged to visit your [county FSA office](#) to file an accurate crop certification report by the applicable deadline. Acreage reporting is necessary to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements.

The following acreage reporting dates are applicable in Washington:

- December 15, 2016 - Perennial forage (change for 2017), and the fall seeded crops - alfalfa seed, canola, mint, peas and lentils, small grains and onions planted between August 15 and September 15, 2016
- January 2, 2017 - Honey
- January 15, 2017 - Apples, apricots, blueberries, cherries, cranberries, grapes, nectarines, peaches, pears and plums
- May 15, 2017 - Cabbage planted March 14 to April 20, 2017

- July 15, 2017 - Spring planted alfalfa seed; cabbage planted April 20 to June 10, 2017; onions planted March 14 to April 20, 2017 and all other crops and land uses, including CRP, except crops listed for the other dates
- August 15, 2017 - Buckwheat, cabbage planted June 11 to August 10, 2017

The following exceptions apply to the above acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the above acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the above acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.
- If a perennial forage crop is reported with the intended use of “cover only,” “green manure,” “left standing,” or “seed,” then the acreage must be reported by July 15.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP covered crops is the earlier of the dates listed above or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

For questions regarding crop certification and crop loss reports, please contact your [county FSA office](#).

---

## Acreage Reporting Guidelines for 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 [county FSA office](#).

---

## **Acres Reporting Guidelines for Cover Crops**

The Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Risk Management Agency (RMA) worked together to develop a consistent, simple and flexible policy for cover crop practices.

The guidelines for cover crops are as follows:

**Termination** - The cover crop termination guidelines provide the timeline for terminating cover crops, are based on zones and apply to non-irrigated cropland. To view the zones and additional guidelines visit <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/landuse/crops/> and click "Cover Crop Termination Guidelines."

**Reporting** - The intended use of cover only will be used to report cover crops. This includes crops that were terminated by tillage and reported with an intended use code of green manure. An FSA policy change will allow cover crops to be hayed and grazed. Program eligibility for the cover crop that is being hayed or grazed will be determined by each specific program.

If the crop reported as cover only is harvested for any use other than forage or grazing and is not terminated properly, then that crop will no longer be considered a cover crop.

Crops reported with an intended use of cover only will not count toward the total cropland on the farm. In these situations a subsequent crop will be reported to account for all cropland on the farm.

Cover crops include grasses, legumes, and forbs, for seasonal cover and other conservation purposes. Cover crops are primarily used for erosion control, soil health improvement, and water quality improvement. The cover crop may be terminated by natural causes, such as frost, or intentionally terminated through chemical application, crimping, rolling, tillage or cutting. A cover crop managed and terminated according to NRCS Cover Crop Termination Guidelines is not considered a crop for crop insurance purposes.

Cover crops can be planted: with no subsequent crop planted, before a subsequent crop, after prevented planting acreage, after a planted crop, or into a standing crop.

For questions about reporting cover crops, contact your [county FSA office](#).

---

## **Enrollment Period for 2017 Safety Net Coverage Continues Through August 1**

Producers on farms with base acres under the safety net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill, known as the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, can visit their local FSA office to sign contracts and enroll for the 2017 crop year. The enrollment period will continue until August 1, 2017.

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

If a farm is not enrolled during the 2017 enrollment period, the producers on that farm will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs for the 2017 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 2015 must still enroll during the 2017 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 and wheat. Upland cotton is no longer a covered commodity. For more details regarding these programs, go to [www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc).

For more information, producers are encouraged to visit your [county FSA office](#).

---

## Important Dates and Deadlines

**April 1 – July 1, 2017** – Primary nesting season. During this time period, prior approval of the County Committee is required to spot treat weeds by mowing, burning, or spraying after the stand is established.

**May 29, 2017** – FSA offices will be closed in honor of Memorial Day.

**May 31, 2017** – Final date to request a 2016 crop Marketing Assistance Loan (MAL) for corn, chickpeas, dry peas, lentils, mustard seed, safflower seed, soybeans, sunflower seed, grain sorghum, and rice.

**June 1, 2017** – Final date for joint operations comprised of non-family members to report any operation changes or revisions.

**August 1, 2017** - Deadline for ARC/PLC enrollment.

For previous issues of the FSA Washington newsletter and a list of annual program **reminders**, check the [newsletter page](#) on the FSA Washington website.

---

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).

---