

June 2017



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

# NEWSLETTER

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## Washington State FSA Newsletter

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### State Farm Service Agency

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

**State Executive Director:**  
Vacant

**State Committee:**  
Don Olmstead, Jr., Chair  
Larry DeHaan, Member  
Jesus Limon, Member

### Nominations Open for the 2017 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 the County Committee election nomination process. You may submit a nomination, including a self-nomination, at your [county FSA office](#) until **August 1, 2017**.

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.

Committee 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

Sherly Hagen-Zakarison,  
Member

the Secretary of Agriculture. If elected, members become part of a local decision making and farm program delivery process.

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

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 one or more appointed advisors to further represent the local interests of traditionally underserved farmers and ranchers. Traditionally underserved producers are beginning, women and other minority farmers and ranchers and land owners and/or operators who have limited resources. Other minority groups including Native American and Alaska Natives; persons under the poverty level, and persons that have disabilities are also considered underserved. Contact your county office for a map of LAAs open for this election or see the [map online](#).

All nomination forms for the 2017 election must be postmarked or received in the [county FSA office](#) by **August 1, 2017**.

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: [www.fsa.usda.gov/elections](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/elections) or hear from county committee members in Washington as they tell about their experiences in a short [video](#).

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## **Sonny Perdue Sworn in as 31st U.S. Secretary of Agriculture**

Sonny Perdue was sworn in as the 31st U.S. Secretary of Agriculture by fellow Georgian and Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court Clarence Thomas in a brief ceremony on April 25 at the Supreme Court building.

Perdue grew up on a dairy and diversified row crop farm in Bonaire, Georgia. Being uniquely qualified as a former farmer, agribusinessman, veterinarian, state legislator and governor of Georgia, he has experienced the agriculture industry from every possible perspective throughout his life.

As secretary, Perdue says he will champion the concerns of farmers, ranchers, foresters and producers, and will work tirelessly to solve the issues facing our farm families.

Perdue's policies as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture will be guided by four principles which will inform his decisions. First, he will maximize the ability of the men and women of America's agriculture and agribusiness sector to create jobs, to produce and sell the foods and fiber that feed and clothe the world, and to reap the earned reward of their labor. Second, he will prioritize customer service every day for American taxpayers and consumers. Third, as Americans expect a safe and secure food supply, USDA will

continue to serve in the critical role of ensuring the food we put on the table to feed our families meets the strict safety standards we've established. And fourth, Perdue will always remember that America's agricultural bounty comes directly from the land.

For more information about Secretary Perdue, visit [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov).

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## Acreage Reporting Deadline Nears for Spring-Seeded Crops

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 between March 14 and 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](#).

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## Policy Updates for Acreage Reporting

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) recently made several policy updates for acreage reporting for cover crops, revising intended use, late-filed provisions, grazing allotments as well as updating the definitions of “idle” and “fallow.”

### **Reporting Cover Crops:**

FSA made changes to the types of cover crops. Cover crop types can be chosen from the following four categories:

- Cereals and other grasses - Any cover crop that is classified as a grass plant or cereal grain, and would include, but not be limited to, the following cover crops: cereal rye, wheat, barley, oats, black oats, triticale, annual ryegrass, pearl millet, foxtail millet (also called German, Italian or Hungarian millet), sorghum sudan grass, sorghum and other millets and grasses.
- Legumes - Any cover crop that is classified as a legume, including, but not limited to, clovers, vetches, peas, sun hemp, cowpeas, lentils and other legumes.
- Brassicas and other broadleaves - Any cover crop that is classified as a non-legume broadleaf, including, but not limited to, brassicas such as radishes, turnips, canola, rapeseed, oilseed rape, and mustards, as well as other broadleaf plants such as phacelia, flax, sunflower, buckwheat, and safflower.
- Mixtures - Mixes of two or more cover crop species planted at the same time, for example, oats and radishes.

If the cover crop is harvested for any use other than forage or grazing and is not terminated according to policy guidelines, then that crop will no longer be considered a cover crop and the acreage report must be revised to reflect the actual crop.

### **Permitted Revision of Intended use After Acreage Reporting Date:**

New operators or owners, who pick up a farm after the acreage reporting deadline has passed and the crop has already been reported on the farm, have 30 days to change the intended use. Producer share interest changes alone will not allow for revisions to intended use after the acreage reporting date. The revision must be performed by either the acreage reporting date or within 30 calendar days from the date when the new operator or owner acquired the lease on land, control of the land or ownership and new producer crop share interest in the previously reported crop acreage. Under this policy, appropriate documentation must be provided to the County Committee's satisfaction to determine that a legitimate operator or ownership and producer crop share interest change occurred to permit the revision.

### **Acreage Reports:**

In order to maintain program eligibility and benefits, producers must timely file acreage reports. Failure to file an acreage report by the crop acreage reporting deadline may result in ineligibility for future program benefits. FSA will not accept acreage reports provided more than a year after the acreage reporting deadline.

### **Reporting Grazing Allotments:**

FSA offices can now accept acreage reports for grazing allotments. Producers will use form "FSA-578" to report grazing allotments as animal unit months (AUMs) using the "Reporting Unit" field. The local FSA office will need the grazing period start and end date and the percent of public land.

### Definitions of Terms

FSA defines "idle" as cropland or a balance of cropland within a Common Land Unit (CLU) (field/subfield) which is not planted or considered not planted and does not meet the definition of fallow or skip row. For example, the balance of a field that could not be planted due to moisture or a turn area that is not planted would be reported as idle.

Fallow is considered unplanted cropland acres which are part of a crop/fallow rotation where cultivated land that is normally planted is purposely kept out of production during a regular growing season. Resting the ground in this manner allows it to recover its fertility and conserve moisture for crop production in the next growing season.

For more information or to set up an acreage reporting appointment, contact your local [county FSA office](#).

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## Prevent Payment Delays or Losses by Reporting Operation Changes

If you have bought or sold land, or if you have picked up or dropped rented land from your operation, or if there has been a death related to your farm operation, make sure you report the changes to your [county FSA office](#) as soon as possible. Remember, if you are participating in Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs, you will need to notify [NRCS](#) of your operation changes also.

You need to provide a copy of your deed or recorded land contract for purchased property for any land changes. Failure to maintain accurate records with FSA on all land you have an interest in can lead to possible program ineligibility and penalties. Make sure to update signature authorization when changes in the operation occur.

It is your responsibility to report changes timely so that records can be kept current and accurate which may prevent loss of program benefits. Contact your [county FSA office](#) if you need to report changes to your operation. If you participate in NRCS programs, contact your [county NRCS office](#) also.

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## Save Time by Accessing Your FSA Data Online

You may access your personal farm information on file with FSA by using your home computers. You can view, print or export your personal farm data all without visiting an FSA county office by using a program known as **FSAfarm+**.

**FSAfarm+** provides you with secure access to view your personal FSA data, such as base and yields, Conservation Reserve Program data, other conservation program acreage, Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation status information, field boundaries, farm imagery, name and address details, contact information and membership interest and shares in the operation. This data is available for free and in real time. You can export and print farm records,

including maps. Also, you can electronically share your data with a crop insurance agent from your own personal computer.

Farm operators and owners first will need “Level 2 eAuthentication” to access the webportal. This level of security ensures that personal information is protected for each user. Level 2 access can be obtained by going to [www.eauth.usda.gov](http://www.eauth.usda.gov), completing the required information and then visiting your local FSA office to finalize access. In the future, FSA hopes to offer this access to entities, but for now can only offer access to individuals. If you have a business file that identifies you with an interest in an entity, you can see only your interests in that entity.

For more information on **FSAfarm+**, the customer self-service portal, contact your [county FSA office](#).

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## FSA Farm Loan Chattel Checks

If you are a borrower of Farm Service Agency loan programs, FSA employees will make periodic visits to your farm to view your crops, equipment, and livestock that you have pledged as security or collateral for your loan. These visits are called chattel checks. FSA will work directly with you to account for your livestock, equipment, and other collateral to make sure that the livestock are healthy and the equipment is in good repair. You will be contacted to set up an appointment before anyone visits your farm. Normally chattel checks are performed during the summer months.

There are two types of security that FSA will look at during the chattel check.

- Normal Income Security
- Basic Security

Normal Income Security refers to the crops and livestock that you produce on your farm or ranch that FSA has financed. Basic Security refers to real estate, equipment, machinery and foundation livestock that secure your loan. This property must be maintained and kept in good repair through the term of the loan. It is **very important** that you do not sell or trade any of this security property without discussing it first with your FSA Loan Officer who manages your account. FSA’s farm loan staff will work with you through the process of the chattel check. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact your local FSA farm loan team member. For more information on FSA farm loan programs, visit [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

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## 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, visit your [county FSA office](#).

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## FSA Interrupts Continuous CRP Signup

The 2014 Farm Bill requires that beginning Fiscal Year 2017, no more than 24 million acres can be enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program. Current enrollment in CRP is approximately 23.5 million acres. As a result, FSA has paused Continuous CRP enrollment to ensure not exceeding the acreage cap. The pause in enrollment applies to regular Continuous CRP, the Highly Erodible Land Initiative (HELI) and State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) contracts. It does not apply to the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Complete offers received by FSA by May 3 will continue to be processed up to and including contract approval, if all eligibility criteria are met. But complete offers received after May 3 will not be acted on during the pause.

Producers submitting CRP offers after May 3 for any non-CREP continuous signup offer type (SAFE, HELI, Continuous Regular, etc.) can request a contract effective date of October 1, 2017. These offers will not be acted on during the pause, but processing may start again at a later date. Offers on which the producer wants a start date before October 1 will not be accepted until further notice, and may not be accepted at all the remainder of this fiscal year. CREP offers will continue to be accepted regardless of the date received or the proposed start date.

For more information, contact your [county FSA office](#).

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## 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.

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

**July 4, 2017** – USDA Service Centers closed in commemoration of Independence Day.

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

**August 1, 2017** – Deadline, to be effective for the 2017 year, to request farm reconstitutions or farm transfers to another administrative county due to changes in farm.

**August 1, 2017** – Deadline to submit nominations for County Committee elections.

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

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