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Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Washington State FSA Newsletter

Washington State Farm Service Agency

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State Executive Director:
Vacant

State Committee:
Don Olmstead, Jr., Chair

Time to Vote for Your 2018 FSA County Committees

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committee elections are underway in the state.

It is important that every eligible producer participate in these elections because FSA county committees are a link between the agricultural community and the USDA. Elections are conducted for in each county for representatives of Local Administrative Areas (LAA). A map of LAAs open for election and a list of nominees can be found on the FSA state website www.fsa.usda.gov/wa or you can check with your local FSA office.

County committee members are a critical component of FSA operations. Committees should be comprised of members who reflect the diversity of producers involved in production agriculture

Larry Dehaan, Member
Jesus Limon, Member

To find contact information for
your local office go to
www.fsa.usda.gov/wa

in their counties. This means that producers representing underserved groups or communities should be on the committee to speak on behalf of their constituency.

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.

County committee election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters on November 6, 2017. The last day to return completed ballots to your local FSA office is **December 4, 2017**.

For more information on eligibility to serve on FSA county committees, visit: www.fsa.usda.gov/elections.

USDA Offers Targeted Farm Loan Funding for Underserved Groups and Beginning Farmers

The Farm Service Agency offers targeted farm ownership and farm operating loans to assist underserved applicants as well as beginning farmers and ranchers.

USDA defines underserved applicants as a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of the group without regard to their individual qualities. For farm loan program purposes, targeted underserved groups are women, African Americans, American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Hispanics and Asians and Pacific Islanders.

Underserved or beginning farmers and ranchers who cannot obtain commercial credit from a bank can apply for either FSA direct loans or guaranteed loans. Direct loans are made to applicants by FSA. Guaranteed loans are made by lending institutions who arrange for FSA to guarantee the loan. FSA can guarantee up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan. The FSA guarantee allows lenders to make agricultural credit available to producers who do not meet the lender's normal underwriting criteria.

The direct and guaranteed loan program provides for two types of loans: farm ownership loans and farm operating loans. In addition to customary farm operating and ownership loans, FSA now offers microloans through the direct loan program. The focus of Microloans is on the financing needs of small, beginning farmer, niche and non-traditional farm operations. Microloans are available for both ownership and operating finance needs. To learn more about microloans, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans.

To qualify as a beginning producer, an individual or entity must meet the eligibility requirements outlined for direct or guaranteed loans. Additionally, individuals and all entity members must have operated a farm for less than 10 years. Applicants must materially or substantially participate in the operation.

For more information on FSA's farm loan programs and targeted underserved and beginning farmer guidelines, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans.

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 a project is approved.

For all FSA programs, an environmental review must be completed before actions, such as site preparation or ground disturbance are approved. 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.

USDA Issues Safety-Net Payments to Washington Farmers

USDA Washington Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that approximately 9000 Washington farms that enrolled in safety-net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill will receive financial assistance for the 2016 crop year. The programs, known as Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC), are designed to protect against unexpected drops in crop prices or revenues due to market downturns.

Producers in 24 Washington counties have experienced a significant drop in prices or revenues below the benchmark established by the ARC or PLC program and thus, will receive payments totaling almost \$96 million. ARC-Co payments related to wheat, barley, oats, corn, dry peas, and canola crops made up much of those payments. There were also PLC payments for wheat, oats, corn and canola crops.

Payments by county for an eligible commodity can vary because average county yields will differ.

Statewide, over 9700 farms participated in the ARC/PLC safety net programs. More details on the price and yield information used to calculate the financing assistance from the safety-net programs is available on the FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc and www.fsa.usda.gov/wa.

Check Crop Risk Protection before Fall Deadlines

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds producers to review available USDA crop risk protection options, including federal crop insurance and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage, before the fall-seeded crop application deadline of **November 20, 2017**.

Federal crop insurance covers crop losses from natural adversities such as drought, hail and excessive moisture. NAP covers losses from natural disasters to crops for which no permanent federal crop insurance program is available. The following crops in Washington have a NAP application deadline of November 20, 2017:

All perennial crops not listed under the 9/30 category (see www.fsa.usda.gov/wa for complete list)

- asparagus;
- berries;
- grapes;
- honey;
- hops;
- tree fruits and nuts.

You may use a free online tool at www.fsa.usda.gov/nap to determine whether your crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP and to explore the best level of protection for your operation. NAP basic coverage is available at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production, with higher levels of coverage, up to 65 percent of their expected production at 100 percent of the average market price available, including coverage for organics and crops marketed directly to consumers. Crops intended for grazing are not eligible for additional NAP coverage.

Federal crop insurance coverage is sold and delivered solely through private insurance agents. Agent lists are available at all USDA Service Centers or at USDA's online Agent Locator: <http://prodwebnlb.rma.usda.gov/apps/AgentLocator/#>. Producers can use the USDA Cost Estimator, <https://ewebapp.rma.usda.gov/apps/costestimator/Default.aspx>, to predict insurance premium costs.

For more information on NAP, service fees, premiums and sales deadlines, contact your [county FSA office](#).

Free Ag Business Training on Nov. 3, 2017

Don't miss the chance this Friday, November 3, to learn how to save money and follow rules that will help your agriculture business become a success.

Free Agriculture Business Training Day in Yakima will offer nearly 20 classes designed for owners, managers, supervisors and workers in the agriculture industry. Experts will instruct each session. Best of all, there's no cost to attend.

Classes will cover a variety of topics, ranging from saving money on workers' compensation insurance to details about the new requirement to provide paid sick leave to workers in 2018. Two classes will be offered in separate Spanish and English sessions: Farm Labor Contracting and Agriculture Employment Standards.

The Washington State Department of Labor & Industries and Washington State Department of Agriculture are sponsoring the event.

Pre-registration is encouraged, but walk-ins are welcome.

Free Agriculture Business Training Day

When: Friday, Nov. 3, 2017
8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Check-in starts at 8 a.m

Where: Perry Technical Institute – Construction Building
2011 W. Washington Ave.
Yakima, Wash. 98903

Registration and more info: www.Lni.wa.gov/WorkplaceRights/Agriculture
Julie Perales, 360-902-6366, perj235@Lni.wa.gov
Mandalyn Mackey, 360-902-5217, macs235@Lni.wa.gov

WSU Conference Brings Women in Agriculture Together to Network and Learn

On November 18, the 2017 Women in Agriculture Conference will offer women in Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Montana and Alaska a unique opportunity to gather in 40 different locations for a one-day event featuring knowledgeable speakers, inspiring stories, networking with other producers and practical advice for learning new skills.

This year's event, "We Can Do It" covers the topic of developing and strengthening your leadership skills. Visit the website at www.womeninag.wsu.edu for locations, details about the conference and registration.

The lineup for the day includes Alexis Taylor, Oregon Department of Agriculture Director who will challenge participants to strengthen their leadership skills, become more involved with long-time farmers and inspire new farmers. Under her leadership at USDA, the Women in Ag initiative became a driving force in the USDA mission to support the growing and diverse next generation of farmers and ranchers.

Ann Schwartz, Blue Heron Farm owner in the Skagit Valley of Washington State, has a prominent role in sustainable agriculture and is deeply rooted in activism. She will inspire women farmers to develop or renew leadership roles within agriculture and their communities. Her message is to "get involved" and "make a mark" on your farm and in your community.

Each location will have a local panel of women farmers who have been successful in their leadership roles. They will talk about the challenges they faced, how they used a mentor to develop their skills and the difference it has made in their businesses.

This conference is designed for women who are farming, as well as new and aspiring farmers. Supporting spouses, students, interns or people who own an agriculture-related business are also welcome.

The conference registration fee is \$30, but if you register between now and November 5, you will receive the early bird special of \$25. The conference registration fee includes the workshop, light breakfast, lunch and conference materials.

Persons with a disability requiring special accommodations while participating in this program may contact Margaret Viebrock at viebrock@wsu.edu.

Dairy Producers Have Until December 15, 2017 to Enroll for 2018 Coverage

Dairy producers interested in enrolling for 2018 calendar year coverage in the Margin Protection Program (MPP-Dairy) have until close of business on December 15, 2017 to elect basic or buy-up coverage and pay the \$100 administrative fee.

Secretary Sonny Perdue provided dairy producers the choice to opt-out of the program for 2018. Dairies that decide to opt-out are not required to submit any written notification to their local county FSA office. By not having a coverage election form on file in the county office by December 15, the dairy producer will be considered to have opted out for the 2018 calendar year. By opting out, the dairy producer will not receive any MPP-Dairy benefits if payments are triggered for 2018.

Dairies that choose to elect a level of coverage by the deadline will be provided financial assistance when the margin – the difference between the price of milk and feed costs – falls below the coverage level selected by the dairy producer. Dairy farmers enrolling in the MPP-Dairy program can mail the coverage election form to their administrative county FSA office, along with the \$100 administrative fee, without necessitating a trip to the local FSA office. If electing higher coverage for 2018, dairy farmers can either pay the premium in full at the time of enrollment, pay 100 percent of the premium by Sept. 1, 2018, or work with their milk handlers to remit premiums on their behalf directly to FSA.

Dairies participating in the Livestock Gross Margin Dairy Insurance Program through their insurance agent cannot enroll in MPP-Dairy for the same coverage period.

USDA has a web tool to help producers determine the level of coverage under MPP-Dairy that will provide the strongest safety net under a variety of conditions. The online resource, available at www.fsa.usda.gov/mpptool, allows dairy farmers to quickly and easily combine unique operation data and other key variables to calculate their coverage needs based on price projections. Dairies can also review historical data or estimate future coverage based on data projections. The secure site can be accessed via computer, Smartphone, tablet or any other platform, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

For more information, visit FSA online at www.fsa.usda.gov/dairy or stop by a local FSA office to learn more about the MPP-Dairy.

Important Dates and Deadlines

November 1, 2017 – Deadline for 2017 Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) applications.

November 1, 2017 – 2018 ARCPLC enrollment begins.

November 10, 2017 – FSA offices closed for Veterans' Day holiday.

November 6, 2017 – County Committee election ballots mailed to eligible voters.

November 20, 2017 – NAP application deadline for fall-seeded crops (see list in article above).

November 23, 2017 – FSA offices closed for Thanksgiving Day holiday.

December 4, 2017 – County Committee election ballots due to FSA county offices.

December 15, 2017 – Acreage reporting deadline for fall seeded crops and perennial forage.

December 15, 2017 – Deadline to elect 2018 MPP-Dairy basic or buy-up coverage.

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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