

June 2018



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Washington State FSA Newsletter

Washington State Farm Service Agency

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Represent Your Farming Community – FSA Seeks Nominees

Farmers and ranchers have an opportunity to influence federal farm programs with your local knowledge. The Farm Service Agency is seeking nominations for farmers and ranchers willing to represent your peers on FSA's county committees. All county FSA offices will accept nominations through August 1, 2018 for this fall's elections.

There's nothing else like it in the federal government. Farmers and ranchers on FSA county committees make decisions which impact program payments. They can settle appeals of agency decisions. And, they're responsible for hiring FSA managers at the county level.

Robyn Meenach, Member
Maureen Harkcom, Member
Bruce Nelson, Member

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

FSA encourages all interested agricultural producers, including women and minority growers, to seek nomination. Eligible candidates must participate or cooperate in any Farm Service Agency program and be of legal voting age. Even if farmers and ranchers are not currently participating in FSA programs, you are considered eligible to vote if you have farm records on file with FSA.

Each county committee draws its members from local administrative areas. Nominated by local farmers and ranchers, candidates must live in the county's local administrative area they will represent and must be eligible to vote in the county election. Members serve on staggered three-year terms so that one-third of the seats are up for re-election each year. Persons interested in nominating a candidate can contact your local FSA office or check the Farm Service Agency website www.fsa.usda.gov/wa to find out which local administrative areas are up for election. Direct [link for map](#).

Elected county committee members receive an hourly wage for their attendance and representation at county committee meetings.

The 2018 FSA county committee elections will take place in the fall and newly elected committee members begin their terms the following January. FSA will send ballots to all eligible voters.

Additional information and nomination forms may be requested from any Farm Service Agency office. Nomination forms may also be obtained online at <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/news-room/county-committee-elections/index>

Microloans Offer Financing Option

When the amount of financing you need is \$50,000 or less, FSA may be able to assist with a microloan. FSA microloans can be especially helpful for small acreage, beginning farmers and niche and non-traditional farm operations. Modified farm managerial experience requirements accommodate smaller farm operations, beginning farmers, and those with no farm management experience. Some small business experience, plus any farm experience, is a way to meet the farm management requirement for the financing.

For the direct operating microloan, the repayment period varies depending upon the purpose of the loan. General operating and family living expenses are due within 12 months, or when your agricultural commodities sell. For larger purchases such as equipment or livestock, the term will not exceed 7 years.

The application process for a microloan requires the completion of form FSA-2330 "Request for Microloan Assistance" and a few other items depending on the type of microloan that you have requested. Some suggestions for the use of the microloan program are for

fencing, hoop houses, bees and bee equipment, livestock, seed, fertilizer and other materials essential to the farming or ranching operation. If you feel that a microloan may be helpful to your operation, please contact your local [county FSA office](#).

Spring-Planted Crop Acreage Reporting Deadline Nears

Once all your spring crops are planted, you are encouraged to visit your county FSA office to file an accurate crop acreage certification report by the applicable deadline. Acreage reporting is necessary to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements. The upcoming crop acreage reporting deadlines are as follows:

- **May 15, 2018** - Cabbage planted March 14 to April 20, 2018.
- **July 15, 2018** - Spring-planted crops, including cabbage planted April 20 to June 10, 2018, onions planted March 14 to April 20, 2018, and CRP acres.
- **August 15, 2018** - Buckwheat, cabbage planted June 11 to August 10, 2018. If your crop acres have 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 you acquire 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 of the purchased or leased acreage must be provided to the county office. For perennial forage crops reported with the intended use of “cover only,” “green manure,” or “left standing” the acreage must be reported by **July 15, 2018**.

FSA offices now accept acreage reports for grazing allotments. Use form “FSA-578” to report grazing allotments as animal unit months (AUMs). The local FSA office will need a copy of your grazing agreement so FSA can record the allotted animal units (AU), grazing period start, end date and the percent of public land.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that an acreage report for any covered crop must be filed at least 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

For questions regarding crop acreage reports or deadlines, please contact your [county FSA office](#).

Reporting Damaged, Lost or Prevented Planting Crop Acres

Do you have a crop or crops that were damaged or lost due to severe weather or flooding conditions? If the crop is insured, your first priority is to contact your insurance agent. They will assist you in filing a notice of loss. If the crop is covered by the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), you must file a notice of loss with your local FSA county office within 15 days after the disaster occurrence or date the loss or damage to the crop first becomes apparent, or no later than 15 days after the crop is harvested. Producers of hand-harvested crops must notify FSA of damage or loss within 72 hours of the weather event.

You will need to identify the affected acreage for each weather-related event that caused damage or loss. Replanting failed crop acres is required, if it is customary for the area and the final planting date for the crop has not passed. What you do with the crop after the damaging event can impact your eligibility for NAP assistance. If you choose not to harvest the crop, the acres must be left

intact until an appraisal is completed and the acres have been released. If you elect to harvest the crop, you must provide acceptable documentation of the harvested production.

As you complete spring planting, you may experience conditions that restrict or even prevent you from planting crop acres. FSA and Risk Management Agency final planting dates are established to provide an adequate growing season in which you should expect normal yields for the planted crop. If you are not able to physically plant your spring crops during the established planting period, you may qualify for prevented planting credit. Prevented planting of insured crops must be timely reported to your insurance agent. Also filing a similar claim with FSA is helpful as the two agencies typically work together when acreages need to be verified.

Prevented planted NAP covered crops must be reported to your county FSA office within 15 calendar days after the final planting date for the crop. Failing to meet this requirement can greatly affect your potential NAP payment. Prevented planting claims require site verification that an approved disaster condition prevented the planting. You will need to provide documentation showing that a natural disaster prevented the planting and that you made necessary preliminary efforts to plant the crop. You should be prepared to demonstrate that seed, fertilizer, equipment, and labor were available to complete the seeding.

To learn more about filing a notice of loss or prevented planting claim, contact your [county FSA office](#).

Transitioning Expiring CRP Land to Beginning, Veteran or Underserved Farmers and Ranchers

Retired, or retiring landowners or operators, are encouraged to transition their Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres to beginning, veteran or underserved farmers or ranchers through the Transition Incentives Program (TIP). TIP provides annual rental payments to the retiring farmer for up to two additional years after the CRP contract expires, provided the transition is not to a family member.

Enrollment in TIP is on a continuous basis. Beginning, veteran or underserved farmers and ranchers and retiring CRP participants may enroll in TIP beginning one year before the expiration date of the CRP contract or August 15. For example, if a CRP contract is scheduled to expire on September 30, 2018, the land may be offered for enrollment in TIP beginning October 1, 2017 through August 15, 2018. The August deadline allows the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) time to complete the TIP sustainable grazing or crop production conservation plans. The TIP application must be submitted prior to completing the lease or sale of the affected lands.

New landowners or renters must return the land to production using sustainable grazing or farming methods.

For more information on TIP, visit <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation>.

Projects Involving Site Preparation and Ground Disturbance May Require an Environmental Review – Check First

Before starting a project using Farm Service Agency funding, producers need to consult with FSA staff as to the need for an environmental review. An environmental review must be completed before actions are approved, such as site preparation or ground disturbance. Programs that may

require a review include, but are not limited to, the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program and farm loans. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires Federal agencies to consider all potential environmental impacts for federally-funded projects before the project is approved.

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. If you have questions, contact your [county FSA office](#).

Farm Service Agency Adds Eligibility Change to the Livestock Indemnity Program

Agricultural producers who have lost livestock to disease, resulting from a weather disaster, have an additional way to become eligible for the Livestock Indemnity Program. In the event of disease, this change by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) authorizes local FSA county committees to accept veterinarian certifications that livestock deaths were directly related to adverse weather and unpreventable through good animal husbandry and management. The committees may then use this certification to allow eligibility for producers on a case-by-case basis for LIP.

LIP provides benefits to agricultural producers for livestock deaths exceeding normal mortality caused by adverse weather, disease or by attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government. Eligible weather events include earthquakes, hail, tornadoes, hurricanes, storms, blizzard and flooding.

If you are interested in LIP or other USDA disaster assistance programs should contact your [county FSA office](#).

USDA Reopens Application Period for Producers Recovering from Cattle Loss, Other Disasters

Signup Begins June 4 for Livestock Indemnity Program and Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-raised Fish

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will begin accepting disaster assistance program applications on June 4 from agricultural producers who suffered livestock, honeybees, farm-raised fish and other losses due to natural disasters.

USDA's [Farm Service Agency](#) (FSA) is reopening the application period for two disaster assistance programs in response to statutory changes made by Congress earlier this year.

Beginning June 4, FSA will accept new applications for losses for calendar year 2017 or 2018 filed under the [Livestock Indemnity Program](#) (LIP) or [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees,](#)

[and Farm-raised Fish Program](#) (ELAP). Producers who already submitted applications and received decisions on their applications for these years do not need to file again, but they can reapply if they have additional losses or their application was disapproved because it was filed late.

In February, Congress passed the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, which made several changes to these two disaster programs, including:

- Removing ELAP's \$20 million fiscal year funding cap, enabling FSA to pay producers' 2017 applications in full and their 2018 applications as soon as they are approved.
- Removing the per-person and legal entity annual program payment limitation of \$125,000 for LIP for 2017 and future years. (The income limitation applies as it did before, meaning producers with an adjusted gross income of more than \$900,000 are not eligible.)
- Changing LIP to allow producers to receive a payment for injured livestock that are sold for a reduced price due to an eligible event. Previously, the program only covered financial loss for livestock death above normal mortality.

Producers interested in LIP or ELAP should contact their [local USDA service center](#). To apply, producers will need to provide verifiable and reliable production records and other information about their operation.

Drought, wildfires and other disasters continue to impact farmers and ranchers, and LIP and ELAP are two of many programs available through USDA to help producers recover. Learn more at <https://www.usda.gov/disaster>.

Important Dates and Deadlines

June 1, 2018 – Deadline for MPP-Dairy Enrollment.

April 1- July 1, 2018 – Primary nesting season. During this time, prior approval from the county committee is required before spot-treating weeds by mowing, burning or spraying after a CRP stand is established.

July 4, 2018 – USDA Service Centers closed in commemoration of Independence Day.

July 15, 2018 – Final date to report 2017 production for ARC/IC programs.

July 15, 2018 – Final acreage reporting date for spring-seeded crops. (See article above)

August 1, 2018 - 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.

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