

December 2019



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Washington State FSA Newsletter

**Washington State Farm
Service Agency**

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Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

We are still awaiting word on the re-opening of CRP, which will be announced after the CRP regulation resulting from the 2018 Farm Bill is published. That could happen any day. After publication of the regulation, a general CRP signup is expected to start sometime in December and run through January or February 2020. Continuous CRP enrollment should also start when the general signup starts. The Farm Bill and administrative actions have made

www.fsa.usda.gov/wa

State Executive Director:
Jon Wyss

State Committee:
Katlenia Vejraska, Chair
Maureen Harkcom, Member
Jesus Limon, Member
Robyn Meenach, Member
Bruce Nelson, Member

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

numerous changes to CRP, and details will be announced when the regulation is out.

If you have a general CRP contract that is expiring September 30, 2020, including contracts that received one or more one-year extensions, the signup that is expected to start in December and run into early 2020 will be the only opportunity to get back into general CRP when the current contract expires. The exact dates of that signup period will be released with other program details as soon as possible.

County Committee Election Ballots are Due

December 2, 2019 is the final date to return your FSA county committee election ballot. You may submit ballots in person to local USDA service centers or mail your ballots to your local USDA service center. Ballots returned by mail must be postmarked no later than **December 2, 2019**. FSA county committees are your opportunity to have an impact on federal farm programs locally. County committees ensure the fair and equitable administration of FSA programs. They are responsible for the hiring of the County Executive Directors and are the place that producers can appeal most agency determinations. To be eligible to vote, you must participate or cooperate in any Farm Service Agency program or have your farm on record with FSA and be of legal voting age.

Market Facilitation Program (MFP) Signup Ends December 6

Applications for the 2019 MFP program must be received by FSA by December 6 to be eligible for benefits. This program provides benefits to help offset the impacts of trade disruptions. It provides payments for producers who had an interest in the following crops in 2019.

“Non-Specialty” Crops:

Alfalfa	Flaxseed	Safflower
Barley	Lentils	Sesame Seed
Canola	Millet	Sorghum
Chickpeas	Mustard Seed	Soybeans
Corn	Oats	Sunflower
Crambe	Rapeseed	Triticale
Dried Beans	Rye	Wheat
Dried Peas		

“Specialty” Crops:

Cherries
Cranberries

Grapes, Fresh

Hazelnuts

Livestock:

Dairy (Milk)

Hogs

Payment rates for Non-Specialty crops are a flat rate per acre for all acres in the county planted to these crops in 2019. Total eligible acres cannot exceed the acreage planted to all these crops in 2018, although certain exceptions may apply when 2018 plantings were less than 2019. Specialty crops receive a national payment rate per acre for all acres in production in 2019. Dairy and hogs also receive a national payment rate, based on historical milk production levels for dairy and the April 1-May15, 2019 inventory for hogs. Payment rates can be found [here](#).

Completed applications must be received by FSA, or postmarked, by December 6 to be considered for enrollment. Additional eligibility documents must also be provided if the producer is not already a participant in FSA programs. While those eligibility documents may be accepted after the signup deadline, payments cannot be issued until they are received and processed.

The December 6 deadline also applies to 2018 MFP applicants. 2018 applications are only being accepted from producers who were ineligible in 2018 due to their exceeding the adjusted gross income (AGI) limitation. These producers may now be eligible if at least 75% of their income is from farming, ranching or forestry over a three-year period. This same exception applies to 2019 applicants. It is important to remember however that only producers who filed a timely acreage report for 2018 with either FSA or federal crop insurance are eligible for 2018 MFP, regardless of the income provisions.

Most current 2019 participants should have now received benefits equal to 75% of the projected final payment rate. However, all Non-Specialty applicants received a minimum of \$15/acre in the first round of payments. So if their county rate is \$20 or less, they would not have received additional funds in the second payment batch released just before Thanksgiving. A final payment to bring benefits to 100% of the projected total may be issued in early 2020 if they are determined still warranted.

For more information, contact your local FSA office.

2019 Crop Production Reporting Deadlines for NAP Covered Honey, Tree Fruits, Berries, and Grapes Approaching

Producers with 2019 NAP covered honey must report total harvested production by **January 2, 2020** for all honey produced during the 2019 calendar year. Producers of 2019 NAP covered tree fruits (apples, apricots, cherries, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums), nuts, blueberries, cranberries, and grapes must report actual harvested production by **January 15, 2020**. To report production, complete and sign form CCC-452 obtained from your local FSA county office.

Timely Acreage Reporting

All FSA programs require producer to timely report their crop acreages timely. The Risk Management Agency (RMA) along with FSA in recent years worked to establish common reporting dates in an effort to lessen the burden on you the producer. With these changes, we are seeing a high increase in the number of producers reporting after the established deadlines. When reports are not timely filed, it requires you to pay a fee, and an FSA employee is tasked with making a field visit to your farm to verify the crop before the County Committee can consider your report of acreage as timely filed.

December 15th is our first of five (5) acreage reporting dates for the 2020 crop year. Growers who planted fall planted small grains, canola, mint, onions, or dry peas and lentils have until December 15, 2019 to provide a timely filed acreage report to FSA. The second reporting date of January 15th is also getting close. Perennial crops like apples, apricots, blueberries, cherries, cranberries, grapes, nectarines, peaches, pears, and plums are the identified crops with this deadline date.

A recent change in policy now requires producers with Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) to timely report their contracted acreage annually. Producers with CRP can report acreage now and beat the deadline of July 15, when the County Offices are busy with high workload.

Producers with questions regarding acreage reporting requirements are encouraged to contact their local offices and set up an appoint to provide their annual acreage report.

Tree Assistance Program

The Agricultural Act of 2014 as amended by the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 provides FSA the authority to implement the Tree Assistance Program. Eligible trees, bushes, and vines are those from which an annual crop is produced for commercial purposes. Nursery trees include ornamental, fruit, nut and Christmas trees produced for commercial sales.

To be considered an eligible loss trees, bushes, or vines must have suffered more than a 15% mortality loss (after adjustment for normal mortality) in a stand due to an eligible natural disaster. Mortality loss to a stand of eligible trees, bushes, or vines is based on each disaster event and must be filed within 90 calendar days of event or the date when the loss is apparent.

The TAP program has provisions where losses sustained from a certain approved plant disease may be also be considered. Currently the Washington State FSA Committee has approved the following diseases:

Fire Blight

Little Cherry Disease

Cherry Leaf Roll

Peach X

Producers file an application for assistance at their local County Office and must receive written approval prior to removal of trees to be eligible. Producer must also provide documentation to support their claimed losses by providing molecular (PCR) testing to verify the presence of the claimed disease prior to approval.

FSA is required to make a field visit to document your claimed loss. Trees removed prior to application approval are not eligible for assistance. Producers must also be aware the no benefits

can be earned if ground disturbance occurs before FSA completes a cultural and/or environmental review of the areas being removed and replanted.

Participants in the Tree Assistance Program agree to replace eligible trees, bushes, and vines within 12 months from the date your application is approved. A one-year extension to complete the planting can be requested from the State Committee when plantings are delayed due to unforeseen circumstances.

Producers are encouraged to contact their county office as soon as they discover they are infected with an approved disease, or when they experience losses due to a natural disaster.

Get Commodity Loan Paperwork in Early to Receive Funds in 2019

If you are interested in obtaining a commodity loan and having funds disbursed before the end of 2019 calendar year, **please request your loan and submit all required documents by December 20th**. If not, please contact your local county office staff to verify when they will be available during the busy holiday season to process your loan request. Staff need sufficient time to process your loan and trigger it for disbursement by **no later than noon on Thursday, December 26th**. After that, loan requests and funds cannot be disbursed until payment software is re-opened on the first workday of the New Year, **January 2, 2020**

Unauthorized Disposition of Grain

If loan grain has been disposed of through feeding, selling, or any other form of disposal without prior written authorization from the county office staff, it is considered unauthorized disposition. The financial penalties for unauthorized dispositions are severe and a producer's name will be placed on a loan violation list for a two-year period. Always call before you haul any grain under loan.

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), Tree Assistance Program (TAP), 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.

Farm Storage Facility Loans

Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFLs) provide low-interest financing for producers to store, handle and/or transport eligible commodities they produce. This includes the following:

- Acquire, construct or upgrade new or used, portable or permanently affixed, on-farm storage and handling facilities;
- Acquire new or used storage and handling trucks; and
- Acquire portable or permanently affixed storage and handling equipment.

A producer may borrow up to \$500,000 per loan, with a minimum down payment of 15 percent. Loan terms are up to 12 years, depending on the amount of the loan. Producers must demonstrate storage needs based on three years of production history. FSA also provides a microloan option that, while available to all eligible farmers and ranchers, also should be of particular interest to new or small producers where there is a need for financing options for loans up to \$50,000 at a lower down payment with reduced documentation.

An eligible borrower is any person who is a landowner, landlord, leaseholder, tenant or sharecropper. Eligible borrowers must be able to show repayment ability and meet other requirements to qualify for a loan. Contact an FSA office for more details. Applicants for all loans will be charged a nonrefundable \$100 application fee.

The following types of new/used facilities and upgrades are eligible and must have a useful life for at least the term of the loan:

- Conventional cribs or bins;
- Bulk tanks for storing milk or maple sap;
- Oxygen-limiting structures and remanufactured oxygen-limiting structures;
- Flat-type storage structures;
- Electrical equipment, excluding the installation of electrical service to the electrical meter;
- Handling equipment,
- Safety equipment, such as interior and exterior ladders and lighting;
- Equipment to improve, maintain or monitor the quality of stored grain;
- Concrete foundations, aprons, pits and pads, including site preparation, off-farm labor and material, essential to the proper operation of the grain storage and handling equipment;

- Renovation of existing farm storage facilities, under certain circumstances, if the renovation is for maintaining or replacing items;
- Grain handling and grain drying equipment determined by the Commodity Credit Corporation to be needed and essential to the proper operation of a grain storage system (with or without a loan for the storage facility);
- Structures that are bunker-type, horizontal or open silo structures, with at least two concrete walls and a concrete floor;
- Structures suitable for storing hay built according to acceptable design guidelines;

- Structures suitable for storing renewable biomass;
- Cold storage buildings, including prefabricated buildings that are suitable for eligible commodities. Also may include cooling, circulating and monitoring equipment and electrical equipment, including labor and materials for installation of lights, motors and wiring integral to the proper operation of a cold storage facility; and
- Storage and handling trucks, including refrigerated trucks.

You can locate more information on the FSFL program on the web at www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport, or contact your local FSA office.

FSA is Hiring



Whatcom County is hiring for a Loan Analyst. The full vacancy announcement can be found at

<https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/551845600>

Please share this position with anyone you know who may be interested and any questions can be directed to Human Resource Specialist Mitzi Stephens at (509) 323-3007 or by email at Mitzi.stephens@usda.gov.

USDA is an Equal Opportunity Employer

Important Dates and Deadlines

December 2, 2019 – County Committee ballots are due to FSA county offices or postmarked by this date.

December 6, 2019 – Deadline to apply for 2019 MFP.

December 13, 2019 – Deadline to sign up for 2020 DMC. Annual administrative fees are still due by this date even if the dairy operation chose to lock in to a coverage level for five years.

December 15, 2019 – 2020 crop acreage reporting deadline for fall-seeded crops. This includes fall-planted alfalfa, canola, lentils, mint, onions, peas, and small grains.

December 15, 2019 – Deadline to report actual harvested production of 2019 NAP covered fall-seeded crops, including fall canola, fall mint, fall peas, fall lentils, fall seeded small grains.

December 25, 2019 – Christmas Day. USDA Service Centers will be closed.

December 26, 2019 – Last day FSA staff can disburse commodity loans for the 2019 calendar year. Software will be shut down at noon and re-opened for loan disbursal on January 2, 2020. To ensure

your loan request is disbursed timely, please have all required documents submitted to your local FSA office by December 20, 2019 or call your local office to schedule an appointment.

January 1, 2020 – New Year’s Day. USDA Service Centers will be closed.

January 2, 2020 – 2020 crop acreage reporting deadline for honey. 2019 NAP honey production due.

January 15, 2020 – 2020 crop acreage reporting deadline for apples, apricots, blueberries, cherries, cranberries, grapes, nectarines, peaches, pears, and plums. 2019 NAP production due for all listed crops.

January 20, 2020 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. USDA Service Centers will be closed.

January 30, 2020 – Deadline to file a 2019 ELAP Application for Payment and supporting documentation.

January 30, 2020 – Deadline to file a 2019 LFP Application for Payment and supporting documentation.

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).

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