

February 2015



- [State Director Welcome Message](#)
- [USDA Provides Greater Protection for Fruit, Vegetable and Other Specialty Crop Growers](#)
- [2014 Marketing Assistance Loans \(MAL\)](#)
- [2015 Acreage Reporting Dates](#)
- [Livestock Indemnity Program \(LIP\)](#)
- [Tree Assistance Program \(TAP\)](#)
- [Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\)](#)
- [Microloan Cap Grows to \\$50,000](#)
- [Youth Loans](#)
- [Dates To Remember](#)

Wisconsin FSA Newsletter

Wisconsin Farm Service Agency

8030 Excelsior Drive
Suite 100
Madison, WI 53717
www.fsa.usda.gov/wi

State Committee:

Bill Averbeck, Chairperson
Patty Edelburg
George Huber

State Executive Director:

Brad Pfaff

Division Chiefs:

Russell Raeder
Wayne Schwartz
Greg Biba
Andy Halada
Warren Hanson

Please contact your [local FSA Office](#) for questions specific to your operation or county.

State Director Welcome Message

We are halfway through February and Spring is just around the corner. I hope this email newsletter finds you well.

This month's FSA newsletter provides you with a number of important program updates and sign-up deadlines. A number of programs were authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill; including the Agriculture Revenue Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs. Over the past few months, our county offices have held a number of producer informational meetings. These meetings provided you with an overview of each of the programs; including base reallocation, yield update and program election information.

Additional background regarding the Agriculture Revenue Coverage program (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage program (PLC) is available in this newsletter.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Wisconsin agriculture.

Brad Pfaff - State Executive Director

Important Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC)/Price Loss Coverage (PLC) Deadlines Approaching

Producers are reminded that the deadline to update yield history and/or reallocate base acres is February 27, 2015. Farm owners and producers can choose between the new 2014 Farm Bill established programs, ARC and/or PLC, through March 31, 2015. The new programs, designed to help producers better manage risk, usher in one of the most significant reforms to U.S. farm programs in decades.

USDA helped create online tools to assist in the decision process. It allows farm owners and producers to enter information about their operation and see projections that show what ARC and/or PLC will mean for them under possible future scenarios. Farm owners and producers can access the online resources, available at www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc, from the convenience of their home computer or mobile device at any time.

Covered commodities include barley, corn, grain sorghum, oats, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

Dates associated with ARC and PLC that farm owners and producers need to know:

- Now through February 27, 2015: Farm owners or producers may visit their local Farm Service Agency office to update yield history and/or reallocate base acres. **At least one owner per FSA farm must sign to update yields and/or reallocate base acres by this deadline.**
- Now through March 31, 2015: Producers make a one-time election between ARC and PLC for the 2014 through 2018 crop years. All producers with an interest in the cropland on the farm must sign the election form. **Failure to elect a program by this date results in the default of the farm to the PLC program for 2015 through 2018 and ineligibility for any ARC or PLC payments on the applicable farm for 2014.**
- Mid-April 2015 through summer 2015: Producers sign contracts for 2014 and 2015 crop years.
- October 2015: Payments issued for 2014 crop year, if earned.

Please contact your local FSA as soon as possible to schedule an appointment and complete the yield history and/or base reallocation process by the February 27th deadline and the election process by the March 31st deadline. Remember that at least one owner per FSA farm must sign the necessary base and yield forms by February 27th.

USDA Provides Greater Protection for Fruit, Vegetable and Other Specialty Crop Growers

Free Basic Coverage Plans and Premium Discounts Available for New, Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Income Farmers

Greater protection is now available from the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program for crops that are not eligible for coverage through the federal crop insurance program. The new options, created by the 2014 Farm Bill, provide greater coverage for losses when natural disasters affect specialty crops such as vegetables, fruits, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, maple sap, and energy crops.

Previously, the program offered coverage at 55% of the average market price for crop when losses exceeded 50 percent of the expected production. Producers can now choose higher levels of coverage of up to 65 percent of their expected production at 100% of the average market price. The cost of basic coverage (55% of price and 50% of expected production) is a \$250 service fee per crop. However, a producer never has to pay more than \$750 in service fees per county and no more than \$1875 if producing in three or more counties.

Buy-up coverage, which offers protection at 100% of the average market price for the crop, along with yield options for 50%, 55%, 60% and 65% of expected production is available for the \$250 service fee per

crop plus 5.25% of the liability for the coverage. However, no producer has to pay more than \$6563 for buy-up coverage regardless how many crops are covered.

A waiver of the \$250 service fee and a 50% reduction in buy-up coverage is available for limited resource producers, beginning farmers and socially disadvantaged producers (which includes females).

To help producers learn more about the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program and how it can help them, USDA, in partnership with Michigan State University and the University of Illinois, created an online resource. The Web tool, available at www.fsa.usda.gov/nap, allows producers to determine whether their crops are eligible for coverage. It also gives them an opportunity to explore a variety of options and levels to determine the best protection level for their operation.

The deadline to apply for 2015 NAP basic coverage or buy-up coverage on spring planted crops is March 16, 2015.

To learn more, visit the Farm Service Agency (FSA) website at www.fsa.usda.gov/nap or contact your local FSA Office.

2014 Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL)

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) is accepting requests for marketing assistance loans (MALs) for eligible 2014 commodities. MAL's are nine-month loans with a locked interest rate currently at 1.25%.

MALs for the 2014 crop year become available after the harvest of a crop and extend through to the commodity's final loan availability date.

MALs provide producers interim financing after harvest to help meet cash flow needs while waiting to feed or market a commodity. A producer who is eligible to obtain a loan, but agrees to forgo the loan, may obtain a Loan Deficiency Payment (LDP) if such a payment is available.

Final Availability Dates for Marketing Assistance Loans & Loan Deficiency Payments

- March 31, 2015 - Barley, Honey, Oats, Wheat
- June 1, 2015 – Corn and Soybeans

National and county loans rates for 2014 crops are posted on the FSA website at: www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport.

For more information, please contact your local FSA office.

2015 Acreage Reporting Dates

The deadline to report 2015 crops to Farm Service Agency (FSA) that had a November 15, 2014 reporting deadline without paying a late-file fee has been extended for producers who do not have federal crop insurance or Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance (NAP) coverage on a crop. Crops under this waiver include alfalfa, perennial forages, wheat, fall-seeded small grains and pasture. The late-filed report can be accepted as long as FSA can confirm the existence of the crop. The Risk Management Agency (RMA) did not grant a waiver so producers need to consult their crop insurance agent for deadlines for insured crops.

All 2015 spring seeded crops must be reported to FSA by no later than July 15, 2015.

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 FSA.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP covered crops is the earlier of the reporting date for the crop or 15 calendar days

before harvesting of the crop begins. This is especially important for NAP policies on spring seeded crops with a July 15, 2015 reporting deadline.

For questions regarding acreage reporting please contact your local FSA office.

Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to eligible producers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law. LIP compensates livestock owners and contract growers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather, including losses due to floods, blizzards, wildfires, extreme heat or extreme cold.

For 2015, eligible losses must occur on or after January 1, 2015 and before December 31, 2015. A notice of loss must be filed with Farm Service Agency within 30 days of when the loss of livestock is apparent. Participants must provide the following supporting documentation to their local FSA office no later than 30 calendar days after the end of the calendar year for which benefits are requested:

- Proof of death documentation;
- Copy of grower's contracts (if applicable);
- Proof of normal mortality documentation.

Producers who suffer livestock losses in 2015 must file both of the following:

- A notice of loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss was apparent or by January 30, 2016;
- An application for payment by January 30, 2016.

Additional Information about LIP is available at your local FSA office.

Tree Assistance Program (TAP)

Orchardists and nursery tree growers who experience losses from natural disasters can sign up assistance from the Tree Assistance Program (TAP). TAP provides financial assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines damaged by natural disasters.

Eligible tree types include trees, bushes or vines that produce an annual crop for commercial purposes. Nursery trees include ornamental, fruit, nut and Christmas trees that are produced for commercial sale. Trees used for pulp or timber are ineligible.

To qualify for TAP, orchardists must suffer a qualifying tree, bush or vine loss in excess of 15% adjusted for normal mortality from an eligible natural disaster. The eligible trees, bushes or vines must have been owned when the natural disaster occurred; however, eligible growers are not required to own the land on which the eligible trees, bushes and vines were planted.

If the TAP application is approved, the eligible trees, bushes and vines must be replaced within 12 months from the date the application is approved. The cumulative total quantity of acres planted to trees, bushes or vines, for which a producer can receive TAP payments, cannot exceed 500 acres annually.

For losses that occur on or after January 1, 2015, producers must provide an application and supporting documentation to Farm Service Agency within 90 calendar days of each disaster event or date when the loss of trees, bushes, or vines is apparent to the producer.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

Continuous Signup, Honey Bee Initiative

Signup for the continuous CRP program is currently underway at FSA. Under continuous signup authority, environmentally sensitive land devoted to certain conservation practices can be enrolled at any time. Offers are automatically accepted provided the land and producers meet certain eligibility requirements and are not subject to competitive bidding.

The effective date of the CRP contract is the first day of the month following the month of approval. In certain circumstances, producers may defer the effective date for up to six months.

Possible CRP benefits to the participant include rental payments based on county average dryland cash rent, cost share payments of up to 50 percent of the average cost, practice incentive payment (PIP) equal to 40 percent of the eligible installation costs for certain practices and an upfront signing incentive payment (SIP) of up to \$150 per acre for certain practices.

Generally, a producer must have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months prior to submitting the offer. Eligible land includes land that is planted or considered planted for four out of the previous six crop years from 2008 to 2013 and is physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity. Expiring continuous CRP signup contracts are eligible for re-enrollment under a new contract.

NEW! Honey Bee Initiative on CRP Contracts - County FSA offices can now be actively working with producers interested in installing honey bee habitat as a mid-contract management. Interested producers will need to get an approved Conservation Plan of Operations (CPO) modified by NRCS prior to any Bee Incentive Payments (BIP) are made and prior to the actual installation of the practice.

Microloan Cap Grows to \$50,000

Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds farmers that the FSA borrowing limit for microloans has increased to \$50,000. Microloans offer borrowers simplified lending with less paperwork.

The microloan program allows beginning, small and mid-sized farmers access to FSA loans using a simplified application process with up to seven years to repay. Microloans are part of USDA's continued commitment to [small and midsized farming operations](#).

To complement the microloan program additional changes to FSA eligibility requirements will enhance beginning farmers' access to land, a key barrier to entry level producers. FSA policies related to farm experience have changed so that other types of skills may be considered to meet the direct farming experience required for farm ownership loan eligibility. Operation or management of non-farm businesses, leadership positions while serving in the military, or advanced education in an agricultural field will now count towards the experience applicants need to show when applying for farm ownership loans.

Important Note: Microloans cannot be used to purchase real estate.

Since 2010, FSA has made a record amount of farm loans — more than 165,000 loans totaling nearly \$23 billion. More than 50% of USDA's farm loans now go to beginning farmers. In addition, FSA has increased its lending to socially disadvantaged producers by nearly 50% since 2010.

Please review the FSA [Microloan Program Fact Sheet](#) for program application, eligibility and related information.

Youth Loans

The Farm Service Agency makes loans to youth to establish and operate agricultural income-producing projects in connection with 4-H clubs, FFA and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and

provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is \$5000.

Youth Loan Eligibility Requirements:

- Be a citizen of the United States or a legal resident alien;
- Be 10 years to 20 years of age;
- Comply with FSA's general eligibility requirements;
- Be unable to get a loan from other sources;
- Conduct a modest income-producing project in a supervised program of work as outlined above;
- Demonstrate capability of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. The project supervisor must recommend the youth loan applicant, along with providing adequate supervision.

Stop by your local Farm Service Agency office for help preparing and processing the application forms.

Dates to Remember

February 16th: Offices closed in observance of Washington's Birthday

February 27th: Deadline for ARC/PLC base reallocations and/or yield updates on an FSA farm number basis with owner signature

March 16th: Deadline to apply for 2015 NAP basic or buy-up coverage on spring planted non-insurable NAP crops

March 31st: Deadline for ARC or PLC election on an FSA farm number basis

March 31st: Deadline to obtain a 2014 barley, oats, wheat or honey loan

May 25th: Offices closed in observance of Memorial Day

June 1st: Deadline to obtain a 2014 corn or soybean loan

Ongoing: Continuous Conservation Reserve program enrollment
Farm Storage Facility Loan program applications

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. 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).

Update your subscriptions, modify your password or e-mail address, or stop subscriptions at any time on your [Subscriber Preferences Page](#). You will need to use your e-mail address to log in. If you have questions or problems with the subscription service, please contact subscriberhelp.govdelivery.com. For all other inquiries, please contact askfsa@usda.gov.

If you have questions about FSA activities, please view our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page or you may also [Search](#) our web site. These features are designed to assist you in obtaining the information you are seeking.

This service is provided to you at no charge by the [USDA Farm Service Agency](#).

This email was sent to susan.hunter@wi.usda.gov using GovDelivery, on behalf of: USDA Farm Service Agency · 1400 Independence Ave., S.W. · Washington, DC 20250 · 800-439-1420

