

December 2016



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## Wisconsin FSA Newsletter

### Wisconsin Farm Service Agency

8030 Excelsior Dr.  
Suite 100  
Madison, WI 53717

Phone: 608-662-4422  
Fax: 855-758-0755

**State Executive Director:**  
Patty Edelburg

**State Committee:**  
Bill Averbek  
George Huber  
Linda Ceylor  
Jamie Derr  
Mike Gallagher

### A Message from Patty

As the year comes to a close, I find myself taking moments to think about this year. I will remember it fondly. I had the amazing opportunity to serve as the State Executive Director of the Wisconsin Farm Service Agency, after previously serving on the Wisconsin State Committee for 6 years. Since April, I have travelled across Wisconsin and had the chance to meet some of Wisconsin's amazing producers. I have been able to see the positive impact that the Farm Service Agency makes in communities across Wisconsin and for that, I will forever be grateful.

This month, I am very excited about an opportunity that we have been given with our Conservation Reserve Program. Wisconsin has been approved for the Pollinators and Monarchs State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Project Area. Nationwide, 700,000 acres for SAFE efforts have been authorized by USDA. Wisconsin has received 50,000 of those acres. SAFE practices restore high-priority wildlife habitat and are tailored to a specific state's needs. This project area will cover the entire southern two-

**Farm Loan Chief:**

Tom Brandt

**Farm Program Chief/Executive Officer:**

Russ Raeder

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thirds of Wisconsin and provide the ability to establish and restore critical habitats for the state's pollinators and monarchs. This is a victory for conservation in Wisconsin that will allow the Farm Service Agency to positively impact our landscape for years to come.

Since I am a political appointee, my term is ending as the Obama Administration comes to a close. My last day will be January 20th. In the upcoming months a new State Executive Director and a new State Committee will be named. Until then, an acting SED will be named. The State Committee will continue until another committee has been appointed. It has been my pleasure to serve Wisconsin's fine agricultural producers for the last eight months. I wish you well as you continue to provide safe and reliable food sources for America and the world.

Happy New Year,

Patty Edelburg

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## Dates to Remember

**January 1, 2017:**

New County Committee members take office

**January 2, 2017:**

USDA Service Centers closed in observance of New Years

**January 3, 2017:**

Acreage reporting deadline for 2017 honey

**January 16, 2017:**

USDA Service Centers closed in observance of Martin Luther King Day

**January 17, 2017:**

Acreage reporting deadline for crops including apples, asparagus, blueberries, caneberries, cherries, cranberries, currants, grapes, hops, huckleberries, pears, and strawberries

**February 2, 2017:**

Acreage reporting deadline for 2017 maple sap

**February 20, 2017:**

USDA Service Centers closed in observance of President's Day

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## **USDA Announces New Conservation Opportunities to Improve Water Quality and Restore Wildlife Habitat**

USDA will offer farmers and ranchers more opportunities to participate in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The announcement includes new CRP practices to protect water quality and adds an additional 1.1 million acres targeted to benefit wildlife, pollinators and wetlands.

The new conservation initiative known as Clean Lakes, Estuaries and Rivers (CLEAR) will add new tools to CRP that can help to improve water quality. CLEAR will assist landowners with the cost of building bioreactors and saturated buffers that filter nitrates and other nutrients from tile-drained cropland. Early estimates indicate that CLEAR could help to reduce nitrate runoff by as much as 40 percent over traditional conservation methods. CLEAR may cover up to 90 percent of the cost to install these new practices through incentives and cost-share. These new methods are especially important in areas where traditional buffers have not been enough to prevent nutrients from reaching bodies of water.

USDA will also add an additional 1.1 million acres to a number of key CRP practices that are critically important to wildlife and conservation. These include 700,000 acres for State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) efforts, which restore high-priority wildlife habitat tailored to a specific state's needs. In addition to SAFE, 300,000 acres will be added to target wetlands restoration that are nature's water filters and 100,000 acres for pollinator habitat that support 30 percent of agricultural production.

The continued strong demand for CRP, combined with the limited acreage available for enrollment and lower land rental rates, allows USDA to modify certain program components without affecting the integrity of the program. Signing incentives are being reduced by \$25 per acre on certain practices for fiscal year 2018 enrollments (incentives are currently between \$100 and \$150 per acre) and a cap on the maximum soil rental rate is being instituted for Continuous CRP at \$300 per acre. The savings from these changes are being reinvested back in CRP, including the additional acres for SAFE, pollinator habitat and wetlands restoration.

To learn more about FSA's conservation programs, visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation) or contact your local FSA office. To find your local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

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## **Organic Producers and Handlers May Apply for Certification Cost Share Reimbursements; Expanded Eligibility for Transition and State Certification Cost**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced that starting March 20, 2017, organic producers and handlers will be able to visit one of the over 2,100 USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices to apply for federal reimbursement to assist with the cost of receiving and maintaining organic or transitional certification.

USDA reimburses organic producers up to 75 percent of the cost of organic certification, but only about half of the nation's organic operations currently participate in the program. Starting March 20, USDA will provide a uniform, streamlined process for organic producers and handlers to apply for organic cost share assistance either by mail or in person.

USDA is making changes to increase participation in the National Organic Certification Cost Share Program (NOCCSP) and the Agricultural Management Assistance Organic Certification Cost Share Program, and provide more opportunities for organic producers to access other USDA programs, such as disaster protection and loans for farms, facilities and marketing. Producers can also access information on nonfederal agricultural resources and get referrals to local experts, including organic agriculture, through USDA's Bridges to Opportunity service at the local FSA office.

Historically, many state departments of agriculture have obtained grants to disburse reimbursements to those

producers and handlers qualifying for cost share assistance. FSA will continue to partner with states to administer the programs. For state departments that want to continue to directly administer the programs, applications will be due Feb. 17, 2017.

Eligible producers include any certified producers or handlers who have paid organic or transitional certification fees to a [USDA-accredited certifying agent](#). Application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement/ arrangement requirements, travel/per diem for inspectors, user fees, sales assessments and postage are all eligible for a cost share reimbursement from USDA.

Once certified, producers and handlers are eligible to receive reimbursement for up to 75 percent of certification costs each year up to a maximum of \$750 per certification scope—crops, livestock, wild crops and handling. Today's announcement also adds transitional certification and state organic program fees as additional scopes.

To learn more about organic certification cost share, please visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/organic](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/organic) or contact a local FSA office by visiting <http://offices.usda.gov>.

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## **USDA Expands Farm Loans for Native Americans Farming and Ranching on Tribal Land**

USDA has approved and obligated the first loan under the Highly Fractionated Indian Land Loan program (HFIL). The program, made possible by the 2014 Farm Bill, provides revolving loan funds to qualified intermediary lenders, allowing qualified tribes and individuals the ability to purchase tribal farmland that has multiple owners.

The first recipient, the Native American Community Development Corporation Financial Services, Inc. (NACDCFS) of Browning, Mont., will lend funds directly to tribal members through a \$10 million intermediary HFIL loan from USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA). NACDCFS addresses critical needs in Native American communities related to the growth of family assets, supports economic development, and enhances the quality of life for communities and residents located on or near Montana's seven Indian reservations. NACDCFS provides one-on-one technical assistance to Native American entrepreneurs and agricultural producers. NACDCFS is a 501(c) (3), certified Native Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), through the U.S. Department of Treasury.

Under the 1887 Dawes Act, Indian reservation land was divided and allotted to individual tribal members such that with the passing of each generation, title ownership was divided and parceled among heirs, while the land was not. As a result, land once owned by a single person could today be owned by hundreds or thousands of individuals, resulting in what is known as "highly fractionated Indian land." In many instances, landowners are unknown or cannot be located, which complicates the coordination of ownership or prevents the use of the property altogether. There are more than 245,000 owners of three million fractionated land interests, spanning approximately 150 Indian reservations.

Under HFIL, tribes and tribal members can submit an application directly to an intermediary lender. To participate, intermediary lenders first must be approved by USDA. The lenders may be private and tribal nonprofit corporations, public agencies, Indian tribes or lenders subject to federal or state regulation (such as a credit union or other financial institution). FSA will lend to the intermediary, which will relend to the applicant. The intermediary lender also will administer the loan for the applicant.

For more information on the program, visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans) or contact the local FSA county office. To find the local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

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## Report Livestock Losses

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 hurricanes, floods, blizzards, wildfires, extreme heat or extreme cold.

For 2016, eligible losses must occur on or after January 1, 2016, and before December 31, 2016. A notice of loss must be filed with FSA 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 growers contracts
- Proof of normal mortality documentation

USDA has established normal mortality rates for each type and weight range of eligible livestock, i.e. Adult Beef Cow = 1.5% and Non-Adult Beef Cattle (less than 400 pounds) = 5%. These established percentages reflect losses that are considered expected or typical under "normal" conditions. Producers who suffer livestock losses in 2016 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, 2017
- An application for payment by January 30, 2017

Additional Information about LIP is available at your local FSA office or online at: [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

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## USDA Announces Enrollment Period for Safety Net Coverage in 2017

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 begin visiting FSA county offices to sign contracts and enroll for the 2017 crop year. The enrollment period will continue until Aug. 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, producers are encouraged to visit their local FSA office. To find a local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

## USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) Online Hay and Grazing Acres Locator Tool

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FSA's **Hay Net** website [www.fsa.usda.gov/haynet](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/haynet) is the "go to" online resource for agricultural producers to list information concerning the need for hay and grazing acres or the availability of hay and grazing acres.

If, due to extenuating circumstances, producers are in need of hay and/or grazing acres to support livestock, please use **Hay Net** to post an advertisement seeking these resources. Likewise, landowners who have hay and/or grazing acres available for livestock producers should post a Hay Net advertisement as well.

A few things to remember when using the **Hay Net** website:

There is a one-time registration process that should be completed by all users who want to post an ad online.

- Users who just want to browse ads DO NOT NEED to have an eAuthentication user id.
- Hay and grazing acre ads will be automatically removed after a period of 13 months.
- Please help your fellow farmer and rancher by keeping ads current and up to date and remove ads you no longer need or want advertised on **Hay Net**.

\*Please, no corporate advertisements on this site.

**Hay Net** is brought to you by FSA as a public service. The sole purpose of this online resource is to provide a site for the exchange of information. FSA does not endorse, guarantee, or otherwise make representations of any kind regarding any user of this site. FSA is not responsible for defining the terms of grazing agreements or lease contracts.

For more information about **Hay Net** and other FSA services and programs, please contact your local FSA office. For local FSA Service Center contact information, please visit: [offices.usda.gov](http://offices.usda.gov).

## Additional Financial Incentives for Conservation Reserve Program Participants to Improve Forest Health and Enhance Wildlife Habitat

In an effort to improve wildlife habitat and the health of private forest lands, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced additional incentives available for Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) participants to actively manage forest lands enrolled in the program.

Under the provisions of the 2014 Farm Bill, \$10 million is available nationwide to eligible CRP participants. Those selected will be encouraged to thin, prescribe burn or otherwise manage their forests in order to allow sunlight to reach the forest floor. This will encourage the development of grasses, forbs and legumes, benefitting numerous species including pollinators and grassland-dependent birds such as the northern bobwhite.

Eligibility is limited to landowners and agricultural producers already enrolled in CRP with conservation covers primarily containing trees. Incentive payments, not to exceed 150 percent of the cost to implement a particular customary forestry activity as described, have been established. CRP participants meeting eligibility requirements and interested in making offers to participate should visit their local FSA county office.

For more information about FSA conservation programs, visit the FSA office at the local USDA service center or go to [www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation). To locate the nearest FSA office, go to <http://offices.usda.gov>.

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## Organic Grain Production and Marketing Seminar Coming to Madison

With organic grain prices as much as three times higher than conventional prices, demand for organic grain far exceeding supply, and potential environmental benefits, opportunities abound in this industry. An engaging weekend-long workshop offered by the Organic Grain Resources and Information Network (OGRAIN) and the Farm and Industry Short Course (FISC) at UW-Madison will help farmers take advantage of the rapidly growing market for organic grain.

**The Organic Grain Production and Marketing Seminar will be held Saturday and Sunday, January 21st and 22nd, 2017 on the UW-Madison campus.**

The workshop will cover many agronomic aspects of organic corn, soybean, and small grain production. In addition, participants will learn about marketing and contracts, food-grade grain production, organic transition and certification, and the financial landscape of going organic. The days will be filled with presentations, panels, and discussions led by experienced organic farmers, researchers, agency personnel and industry representatives. Participants will learn from experts AND each other.

Highlights include:

- Enterprise budgeting and doing the numbers on transition with Paul Dietmann of Badgerland Financial
- Organic weed management with Gary McDonald, cultivation guru
- Organic certification with Jackie DeMinter of MOSA
- Organic grain 101 with Carmen Fernholz
- Beginning farmer panel
- Organic marketing panel
- Food-grade grain production with Dr. Julie Dawson (UW-Madison) and Gilbert Williams (Lonesome Stone Milling LLC)
- Organic No-Till production with Dr. Erin Silva and farmer panel
- Finding the right rotation for you (workshop)

The event is available to anyone with an interest in learning more about organic grain production. However, the seminar emphasizes the needs of beginning farmers who have been farming for fewer than 10 years.

Cost for the workshop is \$50 for the whole weekend and \$30 for one day. A light breakfast, snack, and lunch are included. Need-based scholarships are available. Please contact Anders Gurda ([agurda@wisc.edu](mailto:agurda@wisc.edu)) for more information.

Visit <http://ograin.bpt.me/> to learn more and register.

This seminar is made possible by a grant from the USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. OGRAIN is a collaborative effort of the UW-Madison Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems (CIAS), Farm and Industry Short Course (FISC), UW-Madison/UWEX Organic and Sustainable Cropping Systems Lab, and Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES).

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in this event should contact Kim Iczkowski at (608) 662-4422 extension 133 or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339 by January 18, 2017.

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