

March 2016



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Wisconsin FSA Newsletter

Wisconsin Farm Service Agency

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Please contact your local FSA Office for questions specific to your operation or county.

A Message from the State Executive Director

Spring is on its way, and I know that many farmers throughout the state are eagerly preparing for the hustle and bustle of planting season. As I write this, we received a fair amount of snow across Wisconsin, so we may have to wait a few more weeks for spring to arrive.

Spring is an exciting and hectic time on Wisconsin farms. FSA employees care about our customers, and want to remind them to practice farm safety.

Remember to walk around machinery and check shields and guards; make sure the PTO's master shield is in place; make sure Slow Moving Vehicle signs are on machinery.

If you are taking medicine, take it at the appropriate time and eat on schedule.

If you are working in grain bins know that flowing grain can kill, and it can kill quickly. It takes less than five seconds for a person caught in flowing grain to be trapped. Try not to work alone in bins or confined spaces, and if that's not possible let someone know where you are by checking in regularly by cell phone.

The American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) offers the following safety tips for farmers:

1. Educate yourself on farm equipment. Read and follow instructions according to the equipment's manuals about safety.
2. Conduct regular equipment inspections.
3. Don't wear loose clothing while entering confined spaces such as grain bins, silos and hoppers as this can prevent entanglements.
4. Install Rollover Protective Structures (ROPS) on tractors.

5. Use seat belts while operating tractors with a ROPS. Do not allow additional passengers on the tractor with you.
6. While operating tractors and other farm equipment, be very cautious on rural roadways.
7. Use protective gear when operating machinery: Be familiar with hazardous chemicals. Take extra precaution when handling chemicals such as anhydrous ammonia, methane gas and hydrogen sulfide.
8. Consistently educate your family and co-workers about safety practices, especially children.

On behalf of all Wisconsin FSA employees, we want to wish you the best and safest this year; full of bumper crops as well as record prices.

Take care, and stay safe.

Warren Hanson, Acting State Executive Director

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Dates to Remember

March 31, 2016: Last day to obtain a **Marketing Assistance Loan** on small grains.

May 1, 2016: **Noninsured Assistance Program** application deadline to purchase loss coverage for 2016 Nursery crops.

May 31, 2016: Last day to obtain a **Marketing Assistance Loan** on coarse grains.

June 15-August 1, 2016: **County Committee** election nomination period for Local Administrative Area (LAA) up for election. Individuals can nominate others or themselves.

July 15, 2016: **Acreage reporting deadline** for spring-seeded crops; including soybeans, dark red kidney beans, forage seeding, and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres.

August 1, 2016: **Agriculture Revenue Coverage Price Loss Coverage (ARC/PLC)** enrollment deadline for the 2016 contracts.

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Enrollment Period for 2016 ARC/PLC Coverage Ends Aug. 1

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has announced that producers who chose coverage from the safety net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill, known as the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, can visit FSA county offices through Aug. 1, 2016, to sign contracts to enroll in coverage for 2016.

Although the choice between ARC and PLC is completed and remains in effect through 2018, **producers must still enroll their farm by signing a contract each year to receive coverage.**

Producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office to schedule an appointment to enroll. If a farm is not enrolled during the 2016 enrollment period, producers on that farm will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs should crop prices or farm revenues fall below the historical price or revenue benchmarks established by the program.

The two 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, corn, flaxseed, grain sorghum, oats, rapeseed, safflower seed, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat. For more details regarding these programs, go to 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>.

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USDA Continues to Accept Farmland for Wildlife Habitat in Wisconsin

The Wisconsin Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds farmers, ranchers, and landowners that an allotted number of agricultural land in Wisconsin is eligible for funding for wildlife habitat restoration.

The initiative, known as State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE), is part of the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), a federally-funded voluntary program that for 30 years has assisted agricultural producers with the cost of restoring, enhancing and protecting certain grasses, shrubs and trees to improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and reduce loss of wildlife habitat. In return, USDA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. CRP has helped farmers and ranchers prevent more than 8 billion tons of soil from eroding, reduce nitrogen and phosphorous runoff relative to cropland by 95 and 85 percent respectively, and even sequester 43 million tons of greenhouse gases annually, equal to taking 8 million cars off the road.

In total, up to 400,000 acres of additional agricultural land will be eligible for wildlife habitat restoration funding through this SAFE announcement. The additional acres are part of an earlier CRP wildlife habitat announcement made by Secretary Vilsack. Currently, more than 1 million acres, representing 98 projects, are enrolled in SAFE nationwide.

Here in Wisconsin, 22,500 acres in the projects such as the Central Wisconsin Grassland SAFE, the Glacial Habitat Restoration SAFE, the Southwest Wisconsin Grassland Area SAFE, and the Western Prairie Habitat Restoration Area SAFE are designed specifically to increase grassland birds, waterfowl, pheasants, songbirds and grass and wetland habitats. Since it was first established in 2007, farmers and ranchers have enrolled 12,700 acres, resulting in population increases in native grassland songbirds, waterfowl, pheasants and grassland and wetland habitats.

Interested producers can offer land for enrollment in SAFE and other CRP initiatives by contacting their local FSA county office at <http://offices.usda.gov>. To learn more the 30th anniversary of CRP and to review 30 success stories throughout the year, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/CRPis30 or follow Twitter at #CRPis30. And for more information about FSA conservation programs, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation.

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Filing CCC-941 Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) Certifications

Many producers have experienced delays in receiving Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) payments, Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs) and Market Gains on Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) because they have not filed form CCC-941, Adjusted Gross Income Certification. LDPs will not be paid until all eligible producers, including landowners who share in the crop, have filed a valid CCC-941.

Producers without a valid CCC-941 certifying their compliance with the average adjusted gross income provisions will not receive payments that have been processed. All farm operator/tenants/owners who have not filed a CCC-941 and have pending payments should IMMEDIATELY file the form with their recording county FSA office. Farm operators and tenants are encouraged to ensure that their landowners have filed the form. FSA has been issuing 2014 ARC/PLC payments, 2015 LDPs and Market Gains.

FSA can accept the CCC-941 for 2014, 2015 and 2016. Unlike the past, producers must have the CCC-941 certifying their AGI compliance before any payments can be issued.

USDA Financial Assistance Available to Help Organic Farmers Create Conservation Buffers

USDA is assisting organic farmers with the cost of establishing up to 20,000 acres of new conservation buffers and other practices on and near farms that produce organic crops.

The financial assistance is available from the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), a federally funded voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive land is not farmed or ranched, but instead used for conservation benefits. CRP participants establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as “covers”) to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years.

For conservation buffers, funds are available for establishing shrubs and trees, or supporting pollinating species, and can be planted in blocks or strips. Interested organic producers can offer eligible land for enrollment in this initiative at any time.

Other USDA FSA programs that assist organic farmers include:

- The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program that provides financial assistance for 55 to 100 percent of the average market price for organic crop losses between 50 to 65 percent of expected production due to a natural disaster.
- Marketing assistance loans that provide interim financing to help producers meet cash flow needs without having to sell crops during harvest when market prices are low, and deficiency payments to producers who forgo the loan in return for a payment on the eligible commodity.
- A variety of loans for operating expenses, ownership or guarantees with outside lenders, including streamlined microloans that have a lower amount of paperwork.
- Farm Storage Facility Loans for that provide low-interest financing to build or upgrade storage facilities for organic commodities, including cold storage, grain bins, bulk tanks and drying and handling equipment.
- Services such as mapping farm and field boundaries and reporting organic acreage that can be provided to a farm’s organic certifier or crop insurance agent.

Visit www.fsa.usda.gov/organic to learn more about how FSA can help organic farmers. For an interactive tour of CRP success stories, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/CRPis30 or follow #CRPis30 on Twitter. To learn more about FSA programs visit a local FSA office or www.fsa.usda.gov. To find your local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Farm Loan Borrower Training

Borrower training is available for all Farm Service Agency customers. This training is required for all direct loan applicants, unless the applicant has a waiver issued by the agency.

Borrower training includes instruction in production and financial management. The purpose is to help the applicant develop and improve skills that are necessary to successfully operate a farm and build equity in the operation. It aims to help the producer become financially successful. Borrower training is provided, for a fee, by agency approved vendors. Contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager for a list of approved vendors.

To find your local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Filing a Notice of Loss with the CC-576

The CCC-576, Notice of Loss, is used to report failed acreage and prevented planting and may be completed by any producer with an interest in the crop. Timely filing a Notice of Loss is required for all crops including grasses. For losses on crops covered by the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), you must file a CCC-576, Notice of Loss, in the FSA County Office within 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent.

Producers of hand-harvested crops must notify FSA of damage or loss through the administrative County Office within 72 hours of the date of damage or loss first becomes apparent. This notification can be provided by filing a CCC-576, email, fax or phone. Producers who notify the County Office by any method other than by filing the CCC-576 are still required to file a CCC-576, Notice of Loss, within the required 15 calendar days.

If filing for prevented planting, an acreage report and CCC-576 must be filed within 15 calendar days of the final planting date for the crop.

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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).
