

March 2017



Farm Service Agency

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## NEWSLETTER



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- [Greetings from the Acting State Director](#)
- [Dates to Remember](#)
- [Maintaining Good Credit History](#)
- [Organic Producers and Handlers May Apply for Certification Cost Share Reimbursements](#)
- [USDA Financial Assistance Available to Help Organic Farmers Create Conservation Buffers](#)
- [FSAfarm+; FSA's Customer Self-Service Portal](#)
- [Cover Crop Guidelines](#)

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## Wisconsin FSA Newsletter

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### Wisconsin Farm Service Agency Greetings from the Acting State Director

8030 Excelsior Dr.  
Suite 100  
Madison, WI 53717

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

**Acting State Executive Director:**  
Russell Raeder

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

**Farm Loan Chief:**  
Tom Brandt

**Farm Program Chief/Executive Officer:**  
Russ Raeder

To find contact information for your local office go to [www.fsa.usda.gov/wi](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/wi)

Now that it is finally warming up, many producers are wanting to check on the grain they stored over the winter. In an effort to educate people about the risks of grain bins, the Occupational Health Safety Administration (OSHA) has declared March 27-31, Grain Engulfment Prevention Week. Flowing grain in a storage bin or gravity-flow wagon can be fatal. According to OSHA's most recent statistics, in 2012, 19 workers were engulfed by grain stored in bins, and 8 died. It takes only five seconds to be caught in flowing grain and only 22 seconds to be completely covered. The mechanical aspects of grain handling equipment also present a real danger. Augers, power takeoffs, and other moving parts can grab people or clothing, causing devastating injuries or fatalities in the blink of an eye. Please take a few moments to visit <http://oshastanddown.org/> and check out the various resources available for safe grain handling. In addition, please review this fact sheet titled "[Worker Entry into Grain Storage Bins.](#)"

All of us here at the Farm Service Agency want all of you to have a productive crop year, and that begins with putting safety first.

Stay Safe,

Russ Raeder

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## Dates to Remember

### **March 31, 2017:**

Last day to obtain **Marketing Assistance Loans** on 2016 small grain crops

### **May 1, 2017:**

**Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)** application deadline to purchase loss coverage for 2017 nursery crops

### **May 29, 2017:**

USDA **Service Centers closed** in observance of Memorial Day

### **May 31, 2017:**

Last day to obtain **Marketing Assistance Loans** on 2016 coarse grain crops

### **June 15-August 1, 2017:**

**County Committee Election** nomination period for Local Administrative Area up for election. Individuals can nominate themselves or others.

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## Maintaining Good Credit History

Farm Service Agency (FSA) Farm Loan programs require that applicants have a satisfactory credit history. A credit report is requested for all FSA direct farm loan applicants. These reports are reviewed to verify outstanding debts, if bills are paid timely, and to determine the impact on cash flow.

Information found on a customer's credit report is strictly confidential and is used only as an aid in conducting FSA business.

Our farm loan staff will discuss options with you if you have an unfavorable credit report and will provide a copy of your report. If you dispute the accuracy of the information on the credit report, it is up to you to contact the issuing credit report company to resolve any errors or inaccuracies.

There are multiple ways to remedy an unfavorable credit history:

- Make sure to pay bills on time. Setting up automatic payments or automated reminders can be an effective way to remember payment due dates.
- Pay down existing debt.
- Keep your credit card balances low.
- Avoid suddenly opening or closing existing credit accounts.

FSA's farm loan staff will guide you through the process, which may require you to reapply for a loan after improving or correcting your credit report.

For more information on FSA farm loan programs, visit [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

[BACK TO TOP](#)

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## **Organic Producers and Handlers May Apply for Certification Cost Share Reimbursements**

Organic producers and handlers may now visit over 2,100 USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices to apply for federal reimbursement to assist with the cost of receiving and maintaining organic certification through the Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP).

Through OCCSP, USDA will provide a uniform, streamlined process for organic producers and handlers for organic cost share assistance either by mail or in person. Those approved will be reimbursed up to 75 percent of the cost of organic certification costs each year, up to a maximum of \$750 per certification scope per year- crops, livestock, wild crops, and handling.

Eligible producers include any certified producers or handlers who have paid organic 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.

USDA is making changes to increase participation in the National Organic Certification Cost Share Program (NOCCSP) and at the same time 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 their local FSA office.

Historically, many state departments, such as the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection, 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.

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>.

[BACK TO TOP](#)

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## **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 (NAP) 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](http://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](http://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](http://www.fsa.usda.gov). To find your local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

[BACK TO TOP](#)

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## FSAfarm+; FSA's Customer Self-Service Portal

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) has launched a new tool to provide farmers and ranchers with remote access to their personal farm information using their home computers. Farmers and ranchers can now view, print or export their personal farm data all without visiting an FSA county office.

The program, known as FSAfarm+, provides you with secure access to view your personal FSA data, such as base and yields, Conservation Reserve Program data, other conservation program acreage, Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation status information, field boundaries, farm imagery, name and address details, contact information and membership interest and shares in the operation. This data will be available in real time, at no cost to the producer and allows operators and owners to export and print farm records, including maps. Producers also can electronically share their data with a crop insurance agent from their own personal computer.

Farm operators and owners first will need "Level 2 eAuthentication" to access the web portal. This level of security ensures that personal information is protected for each user. Level 2 access can be obtained by going to [www.eauth.usda.gov](http://www.eauth.usda.gov), completing the required information and then visiting your local FSA office to finalize access.

For more information on FSAfarm+, the customer self-service portal, contact your local FSA office. To find your local FSA county office, click <http://offices.usda.gov>.

[BACK TO TOP](#)

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## Cover Crop Guidelines

Recently, the Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Risk Management Agency (RMA) worked together to develop a consistent, simple and flexible policy for cover crop practices.

The termination and reporting guidelines were updated for cover crops.

### **Termination:**

The cover crop termination guidelines provide the timeline for terminating cover crops, are based on zones, and apply to non-irrigated cropland. To view the zones and additional guidelines visit

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/landuse/crops/> and click "Cover Crop Termination Guidelines."

#### Reporting:

The intended use of "cover only" will be used to report cover crops. This includes crops that were terminated by tillage and reported with an intended use code of green manure. An FSA policy change will allow cover crops to be hayed and grazed. Program eligibility for the cover crop that is being hayed or grazed will be determined by each specific program.

If the crop reported as cover only is harvested for any use other than forage or grazing and is not terminated properly, then that crop will no longer be considered a cover crop.

Crops reported with an intended use of cover only will not count toward the total cropland on the farm. In these situations, a subsequent crop will be reported to account for all cropland on the farm.

Cover crops include grasses, legumes, and forbs planted for seasonal cover and other conservation purposes. Cover crops are primarily used for erosion control, soil health improvement, and water quality improvement. The cover crop may be terminated by natural causes, such as frost, or intentionally terminated through chemical application, crimping, rolling, tillage or cutting. A cover crop managed and terminated according to NRCS Cover Crop Termination Guidelines is **not** considered a crop for crop insurance purposes.

Cover crops can be planted as follows: with no subsequent crop planted, before a subsequent crop, after prevented planting acreage, after a planted crop, or into a standing crop.

[BACK TO TOP](#)

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