

July 2018



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Wisconsin FSA Newsletter

Wisconsin Farm Service Agency **A Message from Sandy Chalmers**

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www.fsa.usda.gov/wi

Haying and spraying is the focus in the countryside right now. In your local FSA office, employees are busy with acreage certification appointments. This is the busiest time of year for our Wisconsin FSA employees, who certify more than a million fields every year. Producers must certify their acreage to maintain program eligibility, so please take note that this important deadline is July 15. While you're in the office, you can also sign your ARC/PLC contract.

To date, we've made about \$26 million in MPP-Dairy payments, with about 5,400 producers enrolled. The May margin of \$6.78 was announced yesterday, so we will begin making May payments next week. Getting these MPP payments out the door is a priority for us, and we are doing everything possible to get the money to you just as quickly as we can.

Many of you have asked about the Conservation Reserve Program and when a sign up will occur. Secretary Perdue just announced a CRP signup that focuses on certain water quality practices and CRP Grasslands, as well as extension opportunities for some current contracts. Important changes have been made to soil rental rates. The enrollment period runs through August 17, so stop in to see us if you are interested.

Have a safe and happy Fourth of July, as we all celebrate the birthday of our nation!

Sandy Chalmers
State Executive Director

Dates to Remember

June 15-August 1:

County Committee Election nomination period for Local Administrative Area (LAA) up for election. Individuals can nominate themselves or others. Nominate and Vote!

July 16, 2018:

Acreage reporting deadline for spring-seeded crops; includes forage seeding, crops intended for cover, green manure, or left standing, and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres

August 1, 2018:

Deadline to enroll 2018 **Agriculture Risk Coverage/Price Loss Coverage** (ARC/PLC) contracts

August 17, 2018:

Deadline to apply for the **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)** Continuous enrollment, re-enrollments, and 1-year extensions.

USDA Reopens Application Period for Producers Recovering from Cattle Loss, Other Disasters

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will begin accepting disaster assistance program applications on June 4 from agricultural producers who suffered livestock, honeybees, farm-raised fish and other losses due to natural disasters.

USDA's **Farm Service Agency** (FSA) is reopening the application period for two disaster assistance programs in response to statutory changes made by Congress earlier this year.

Beginning June 4, FSA will accept new applications for losses for calendar year 2017 or 2018 filed under the **Livestock Indemnity Program** (LIP) or **Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-raised Fish Program** (ELAP). Producers who already submitted applications and received decisions on their applications for these years do not need to file again, but they can reapply if they have additional losses or their application was disapproved because it was filed late.

In February, Congress passed the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, which made several changes to these two disaster programs, including:

- Removing ELAP's \$20 million fiscal year funding cap, enabling FSA to pay producers' 2017 applications in full and their 2018 applications as soon as they are approved.
- Removing the per-person and legal entity annual program payment limitation of \$125,000 for LIP for 2017 and future years. (The income limitation applies as it did before, meaning producers with an adjusted gross income of more than \$900,000 are not eligible.)
- Changing LIP to allow producers to receive a payment for injured livestock that are sold for a reduced price due to an eligible event. Previously, the program only covered financial loss for livestock death above normal mortality.

Producers interested in LIP or ELAP should contact their **local USDA service center**. To apply, producers will need to provide verifiable and reliable production records and other information about their operation.

Drought, wildfires and other disasters continue to impact farmers and ranchers, and LIP and ELAP are two of many programs available through USDA to help producers recover. Learn more at <https://www.usda.gov/disaster>.

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USDA Resumes Continuous Conservation Reserve Program Enrollment

As part of a 33-year effort to protect sensitive lands and improve water quality and wildlife habitat on private lands, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will resume accepting applications for the voluntary [Conservation Reserve Program](#) (CRP). Eligible farmers, ranchers, and private landowners can sign up at their local [Farm Service Agency \(FSA\)](#) office between June 4 and Aug. 17, 2018.

FSA stopped accepting applications last fall for the CRP continuous signup (excluding applications for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and CRP grasslands). This pause allowed USDA to review available acres and avoid exceeding the 24 million-acre CRP cap set by the 2014 Farm Bill. New limited practice availability and short sign up period helps ensure that landowners with the most sensitive acreage will enroll in the program and avoid unintended competition with new and beginning farmers seeking leases. CRP enrollment currently is about 22.7 million acres.

2018 Signup for CRP

For this year's signup, limited priority practices are available for continuous enrollment. They include grassed waterways, filter strips, riparian buffers, wetland restoration and others. [View a full list of practices.](#)

FSA will use updated soil rental rates to make annual rental payments, reflecting current values. It will not offer incentive payments as part of the new signup.

USDA will not open a general signup this year, however, a one-year extension will be offered to existing CRP participants with expiring CRP contracts of 14 years or less. Producers eligible for an extension will receive a letter with more information.

CRP Grasslands

Additionally, FSA established new [ranking criteria](#) for [CRP Grasslands](#). To guarantee all CRP grasslands offers are treated equally, applicants who previously applied will be asked to reapply using the new ranking criteria. Producers with pending applications will receive a letter providing the options.

About CRP

In return for enrolling land in CRP, USDA, through FSA on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), provides participants with annual rental payments and cost-share assistance. Landowners enter into contracts that last between 10 and 15 years. CRP pays producers who remove sensitive lands from production and plant certain grasses, shrubs and trees that improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and increase wildlife habitat.

USDA Resumes Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (continued)

The new changes to CRP do not impact the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, a related program offered by CCC and state partners.

Producers wanting to apply for the CRP continuous signup or CRP grasslands should contact their USDA service center. To locate your local FSA office, visit <https://www.farmers.gov>. More information on CRP can be found at www.fsa.usda.gov/crp.

CRP Participants Must Maintain Approved Cover on Acreages Enrolled in CRP

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) participants are responsible for ensuring adequate, approved vegetative and practice cover is maintained to control erosion throughout the life of the contract after the practice has been established. Participants must also control undesirable vegetation, weeds (including noxious weeds), insects and rodents that may pose a threat to existing cover or adversely impact other landowners in the area.

All CRP maintenance activities, such as mowing, burning, disking and spraying, **must be conducted outside Wisconsin's primary nesting season of May 15 to August 1**. However, spot treatment of the acreage may be allowed during the primary nesting or brood rearing season if, left untreated, the weeds, insects or undesirable species would adversely impact the approved cover. In this instance, **spot treatment is limited to the affected areas in the field and requires County Committee approval prior to beginning the spot treatment**. The County Committee will consult with NRCS to determine if such activities are needed to maintain the approved cover.

Annual mowing of CRP for generic weed control, or for cosmetic purposes, is prohibited at all times.

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USDA Partners with Texas A&M to Help Veterans Seeking Agriculture Loans and Careers

USDA announced a partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Texas A&M's AgriLife Extension Service to help military veterans obtain loans and pursue careers as farmers and ranchers. Secretary Perdue joined local dignitaries, members of the Armed Forces, veterans, and community leaders at the Dallas Farmers Market to unveil the new pilot program.

USDA's [Farm Service Agency](#) (FSA) is collaborating with AgriLife Extension Service on the pilot, which is part of the Texas A&M Battleground to Breaking Ground project. The program makes it easier for veterans to meet federal requirements to get FSA direct [farm ownership](#) loans, which can help provide access to land and capital.

The pilot program, which will include 15 to 18 veterans, will roll out in three phases: an introductory workshop, a business planning curriculum, and a production curriculum over a period of 12 to 18 months.

Typically, loan applicants must participate in the business operations of a farm for at least three years during a 10-year period. However, as part of this pilot program, participants can combine the certificate they receive with their military leadership or management experience to satisfy this requirement. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, approximately 45 percent of armed service members are from rural America.

Pilot program applications will be accepted from interested veterans between June 15 and July 20, 2018, until 11 p.m. central standard time, [apply here](#). For more information about USDA programs, visit [newfarmers.usda.gov/veterans](https://www.farmers.gov/newfarmers.usda.gov/veterans) or <https://www.farmers.gov>.

To learn about other ways USDA is supporting veterans, visit <https://www.usda.gov/our-agency/initiatives/veterans>, and watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAeLqXHUU3w>.

Loan Interest Rates

*Interest rates are announced at the beginning of each month.

[Click here to find the most recent notice with current FSFL and commodity loan interest rates.](#)

[Click here to view current Farm Loan interest rates.](#)

Farm Loans- JUNE 2018

Farm Operating- Direct: 3.625%

Farm Operating- Microloan: 3.625%

Farm Ownership- Direct: 4.000%

Farm Ownership- Microloan: 4.000%

Farm Ownership- Direct, Joint Financing: 2.500%

Farm Ownership- Down Payment: 1.500%

Emergency Loan- Amount of Actual Loss: 3.750%

Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFL)- JUNE 2018

***Note-** FSFL and Commodity loan interest rates are not announced until the first of the applicable month. Interest rates below are subject to change for July 2018 but give a general idea of the interest rate range.

3-year FSFL: 2.625%

5-year FSFL: 2.875%

7-year FSFL: 3.000%

10-year FSFL: 3.000%

12-year FSFL: 3.000%

9-Month Commodity Loans- JUNE 2018

Marketing Assistance Loan: 3.125%

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2018 NRCS Local Work Group Meeting Schedule Announced

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Wisconsin has announced the [schedule for 2018 Local Working Group \(LWG\) meetings](#). Eighteen meetings will be held across Wisconsin in August to gather input and help set priorities for U.S. Department of Agriculture conservation programs under the Farm Bill.

Farmers representing a variety of crops and livestock raised within the local area, private woodland owners, representatives of agricultural and environmental organizations, and representatives of other agriculture and natural resource agencies are welcome and should be represented. Local Working Groups offer a seat at the table for interested individuals and groups to advise NRCS on how best to set priorities and locally implement conservation programs.

Wisconsin LWGs represent two or more counties grouped together by geography, similar land use, resources, and type of agriculture. [See a map of Local Working Groups](#). This will allow greater flexibility and access to funding for the groups.

Local Working Group meetings are open to the public. Anyone interested in becoming a member in LWGs should contact their local [NRCS Service Center](#). Contact your local NRCS District Conservationist if you are interested in participating. For detailed information on local work groups, see [What are Local Working Groups](#) and see the [Schedule of Meetings](#).

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in these meetings should contact Nga Watts, acting ASTC-Management and Strategy, at 352-338-9577, nga.watts@fl.usda.gov, or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339 by July 15, 2018 for the August 2018 meetings.

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