

April 2019



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Wisconsin FSA Newsletter

Wisconsin Farm Service Agency

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A Message from the State Director

Many of you were impacted by the severe weather from late January to early March, where we saw extreme cold followed by multiple winter storms, including blizzard conditions and high winds. FSA now has low-interest emergency loans available in 56 Wisconsin counties. These loans can help producers repair or replace physical property essential to the success of the livestock operation, including farm buildings and livestock losses. The loan amount is limited to actual losses, up to \$500,000. For more information on emergency loans or other FSA loan and disaster programs, get in touch with your nearest FSA office.

As Wisconsin FSA begins to roll out the provisions of the 2018 farm bill, farmers are wondering when they will be signing up for each program. The new Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) program will be the first to roll out, with sign-up expected in mid-June.

Many of our producers have signed up for text alerts, which is a great way to keep up with those critical FSA deadlines. To sign up, text WICOUNTY (insert your own county name) to 372 669. Another good resource is farmers.gov/farmbill, which is updated regularly with the latest information on FSA, RMA and NRCS programs.

Best wishes,

Sandy Chalmers

www.fsa.usda.gov/wi

Dates to Remember

May 10, 2019: Deadline for producers who elected to participate in LGM-Dairy in 2018 to sign up for the limited [retroactive MPP-Dairy program](#).

May 27, 2019: USDA Service Centers closed.

May 31, 2019: Final date to obtain a [commodity loan](#) on 2018 corn, soybeans and other oilseeds, rice, grain sorghum and pulse crops.

June 15-August 1, 2019: [County Committee Election](#) nomination period for Local Administrative Area up for election. Individuals can nominate themselves or others.

Save Time- Make an Appointment with FSA

Producers are encouraged to call their local FSA office to schedule an appointment to ensure maximum use of their time and to make sure FSA staff is available to tend to their important business needs. Please call your local FSA office ahead of your visit to set an appointment and to discuss any records or documentation that might be needed during your appointment. To find your local FSA office, visit: <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>.

Breaking New Ground

Agricultural producers are reminded to consult with FSA and NRCS before breaking out new ground for production purposes as doing so without prior authorization may put a producer's federal farm program benefits in jeopardy. This is especially true for land that must meet Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions.

Producers with HEL determined soils are required to apply tillage, crop residue and rotational requirements as specified in their conservation plan.

Producers should notify FSA as a first point of contact prior to conducting land clearing or drainage type projects to ensure the proposed actions meet compliance criteria such as clearing any trees to create new cropland. These areas will then need to be reviewed to ensure such work will not risk your eligibility for benefits.

Landowners and operators must complete the form AD-1026 - Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification to identify the proposed action and allow FSA to determine whether a referral to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for further review is necessary.

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FSA Reminds Producers of Resources through the Wisconsin Farm Center

Many farmers balance the needs of their family and farm above everything else, often ignoring their own needs. As farmers continue to endure an extended period of tough economic conditions, the Wisconsin Farm Service Agency wants to remind farmers and landowners that help is available.

The **Wisconsin Farm Center** at the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) is there for farmers to call for guidance on finances, farm succession planning and other issues. Farm Center staff work with farmers and their families one-on-one to address each personal situation. All services are **free and confidential**.

Farmers, whether beginning their career or nearing retirement, can experience challenging situations. Staff can walk through options with farmers about how to navigate difficult personal or financial situations. While at times, alternatives may seem very limited, sometimes an outside perspective can help bring light to possibilities.

The Farm Center staff are available to lend a listening ear and if needed, to connect farmers and their families with counseling services. Mental health professionals are a valuable resource that can help through a tough time.

Just as taking care of physical health is important, so is taking care of mental health. Those in need are encouraged to reach out for help and utilize available resources by calling the Wisconsin Farm Center at 800-942-2474. Staff are available Monday through Friday from 7:45 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

If there is a mental health emergency during non-office hours, contact 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.

New Improvement to Streamline Crop Reporting

Farmers and ranchers filing crop acreage reports with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and participating insurance providers approved by the Risk Management Agency (RMA) can now provide the common information from their acreage reports at one office and the information will be electronically shared with the other location.

This new process is part of the USDA Acreage Crop Reporting Streamlining Initiative (ACRSI). This interagency collaboration also includes participating private crop insurance agents and insurance companies, all working to streamline the information collected from farmers and ranchers who participate in USDA programs.

Once filed at one location, data that's important to both FSA and RMA will be securely and electronically shared with the other location saving farmers and ranchers time and avoiding redundant and duplicative reporting.

USDA has been working to streamline the crop reporting process for agricultural producers, who have expressed concerns with providing the same basic common information for multiple locations. In 2013, USDA consolidated the deadlines to 15 dates for submitting these reports, down from the previous 54 dates for RMA and 17 dates for FSA. USDA representatives believe farmers and ranchers will experience a notable improvement in the coming weeks as they approach the peak season for crop reporting later this summer.

More than 93 percent of all annual reported acres to FSA and RMA now are eligible for the common data reporting, and USDA is exploring adding more crops. **Producers must still visit both locations to validate and sign acreage reports, complete maps or provide program-specific information.** The common data from the first-filed acreage report will now be available to pre-populate and accelerate completion of the second report. Plans are underway at USDA to continue building upon the framework with additional efficiencies at a future date.

Farmers and ranchers are also reminded that they can now access their FSA farm information from the convenience of their home computer. Producers can see field boundaries, images of the farm, conservation status, operator and owner information and much more.

The new customer self-service portal, known as FSAFarm+, gives farmers and ranchers online access to securely view, print or export their personal farm data. To enroll in the online service, producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office for details. To find a local FSA office in your area, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

USDA Microloans Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is offering farm ownership microloans, creating a new financing avenue for farmers to buy and improve property. These microloans are especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations.

The microloan program has been hugely successful, providing more than 16,800 low-interest loans, totaling over \$373 million to producers across the country. Microloans have helped farmers and ranchers with operating costs, such as feed, fertilizer, tools, fencing, equipment and living expenses since 2013. Seventy percent of loans have gone to new farmers.

Now, microloans will be available to also help with farm land and building purchases, and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate loans to help farmers strengthen their operations. Microloans provide up to \$50,000 to qualified producers and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

To learn more about the FSA microloan program visit www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans, or contact your local FSA office. To find a local FSA office in your area, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Maintaining the Quality of Farm-Stored Grain

Bins are ideally designed to hold a level volume of grain. When bins are overfilled, and grain is heaped up, airflow is hindered, and the chance of spoilage increases.

Producers who take out marketing assistance loans and use the farm-stored grain as collateral should remember that they are responsible for maintaining the quality of the grain through the term of the loan.

Unauthorized Disposition of Grain

If loan grain has been disposed of through feeding, selling or any other form of disposal without prior written authorization from the county office staff, it is considered unauthorized disposition. The financial penalties for unauthorized dispositions are severe and a producer's name will be placed on a loan violation list for a two-year period. Always call before you haul any grain under loan.

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 always prohibited.

Wisconsin NRCS Announces 2019 EQIP Signup Deadline

Farmers and forest landowners interested in the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQIP) need to apply by May 17, 2019, for funding in 2019. Applications are being taken at all [USDA Service Centers](#) in Wisconsin for select special initiatives. Don't delay; contact your local USDA Service Center NOW to get started.

EQIP is the primary program available to farmers for farm and woodland conservation work, offering payments for over 110 basic conservation practices. Last year, Wisconsin received over \$35 million in funds for EQIP practices.

All eligible applications received by May 17, 2019, will be evaluated for funding in 2019. Farmers may contact their local USDA Service Center to get started on producer eligibility and planning. Farmers who are interested in practices that may require permits, such as manure storage or streambank restoration, are reminded to begin planning and seeking permits as soon as possible. Applicants with shovel-ready projects (designs completed, and permit applications submitted) will receive higher priority.

Sign up by May 17, 2019, for several special initiatives focusing on conservation efforts. Special sign-up opportunities are now open for Beginning Farmer, Farmstead, Soil Health, and four landscape-based initiatives. All offer technical and financial assistance through EQIP.

Landowners interested in applying for EQIP funding should contact their local NRCS office at the [USDA Service Center](#) in their county. For more information, visit www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov.

Current Interest Rates

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

[Click here to find notification of current FSFL and commodity loan interest rates.](#)

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

| Farm Loan Interest Rates | APRIL 2019 |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Farm Operating- Direct | 3.500% |
| Farm Operating- Microloan | 3.500% |
| 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) | APRIL 2019 |
| 3-year FSFL | 2.500% |
| 5-year FSFL | 2.500% |
| 7-year FSFL | 2.500% |
| 10-year FSFL | 2.625% |
| 12-year FSFL | 2.750% |
| 9-Month Commodity Loans | APRIL 2019 |
| Marketing Assistance Loan | 3.500% |

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).