

June 2014



Topics for June

- [USDA Announces Programs to Conserve Sensitive Land and Help Beginning Farmers](#)
- [Farm Service Agency County Committee Nomination Period Begins June 15](#)
- [USDA Announces Funding Availability for Turning Biomass Material into Energy](#)
- [Report Crops before the July 15, 2014, Acreage Reporting Deadline](#)
- [USDA Announces Changes to Fruit, Vegetable and Wild Rice Planting Rules](#)
- [Guaranteed Loan Eligibility](#)
- [Direct Loan Changes](#)
- [Livestock Disaster Assistance Sign-up Underway](#)
- [Hay Net](#)
- [Farm Reconstitutions](#)
- [USDA Kicks off the 2014 "Feds Feed Families" Nationwide Food Drive](#)
- [Special Accommodations Are Available](#)

Alabama FSA State Updates

Alabama FSA State Office

4121 Carmichael Rd.,
Suite 600
Montgomery, AL 36106

Phone: 334-279-3500
Fax: 855-747-0599

State Executive Director:
Daniel Robinson

State Committee Members:
Dr. Walter Hill, Chairperson
Laura Elliott, Member
Danny Ellison, Member
George Hodge, Member
Fred Hughes, Member

Next State Committee Meeting: July 15-16, 2014

USDA Announces Programs to Conserve Sensitive Land and Help Beginning Farmers

Farmers, ranchers and landowners committed to protecting and conserving environmentally sensitive land may sign up for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) beginning June 9. The Secretary also announced that retiring farmers enrolled in CRP could receive incentives to transfer a portion of their land to beginning, disadvantaged or veteran farmers through the Transition Incentives Program (TIP).

CRP provides incentives to producers who utilize conservation methods on environmentally-sensitive lands. For example, farmers are monetarily compensated for establishing long-term vegetative species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as "covers") to control soil erosion, improve water quality, and enhance wildlife habitat.

CRP consists of a "continuous" and "general" sign-up period. Continuous sign up for the voluntary program starts June 9. Under continuous sign-up authority, eligible land can be enrolled in CRP at any time with contracts of up to 10 to 15 years in duration. In lieu of a general sign-up this year, USDA will allow producers with general CRP contracts expiring this September to have the option of a one-year contract extension. USDA will also implement

the 2014 Farm Bill's requirement that producers enrolled through general sign-up for more than five years can exercise the option to opt-out of the program if certain other conditions are met. In addition, the new grassland provisions, which will allow producers to graze their enrolled land, will enable producers to do so with more flexibility.

The Transition Incentives Program provides two additional years of payments for retired farmers and ranchers who transition expiring CRP acres to socially disadvantaged, military veteran, or beginning producers who return the land to sustainable grazing or crop production. Sign up will also begin June 9. TIP funding was increased by more than 30 percent in the 2014 Farm Bill, providing up to \$33 million through 2018.

As part of the 2014 Farm Bill, participants meeting specific qualifications may have the opportunity to terminate their CRP contract during fiscal year 2015 if the contract has been in effect for a minimum of five years and if other conditions are also met.

For more information on CRP and other FSA programs, visit a local FSA county office or go online to www.fsa.usda.gov.

Farm Service Agency County Committee Nomination Period Begins June 15

The nomination period for local Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees begins Sunday, June 15, 2014.

To be eligible to serve on an FSA county committee, a person must participate or cooperate in a program administered by FSA, be eligible to vote in a county committee election and reside in the local administrative area where the person is nominated.

Farmers and ranchers may nominate themselves or others. Organizations representing minorities and women also may nominate candidates. To become a candidate, an eligible individual must sign the nomination form, FSA-669A. The form and other information about FSA county committee elections are available at www.fsa.usda.gov/elections. Nomination forms for the 2014 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA Service Center by close of business on Aug. 1, 2014. Elections will take place this fall.

While FSA county committees do not approve or deny farm ownership or operating loans, they make decisions on disaster and conservation programs, emergency programs, commodity price support loan programs and other agricultural issues. Members serve three-year terms. Nationwide, there are about 7,800 farmers and ranchers serving on FSA county committees. Committees consist of three to 11 members that are elected by eligible producers.

FSA will mail ballots to eligible voters beginning Nov. 3, 2014. Ballots are due back to the local county office either via mail or in person by Dec. 1, 2014. Newly elected committee members and alternates take office on Jan. 1, 2015.

USDA Announces Funding Availability for Turning Biomass Material into Energy

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will begin accepting applications June 16 from energy facilities interested in receiving forest or agricultural residues to generate clean energy. The support comes through the Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP), which was authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill.

BCAP provides financial assistance to farmers and ranchers who establish and maintain new crops of energy biomass, or who harvest and deliver forest or agricultural residues to a qualifying energy facility. Of the total \$25 million per year authorized for BCAP, the 2014 Farm Bill provides up to 50 percent (\$12.5 million) each year for matching payments for the harvest and transportation of biomass residues. BCAP matching payments will resume this summer, while crop incentives will begin in 2015. Some matching payments will support the removal of dead or diseased trees from National Forests and Bureau of Land Management public lands. This will be turned into renewable energy while reducing the risk of forest fire. Agriculture residues, such as corn cobs and stalks, also may qualify as energy-producing feedstock.

With the 2014 Farm Bill requiring several regulatory updates to BCAP, the resumption of payments for starting and maintaining new sources of biomass (Project Areas) has been deferred until a later date when the regulatory updates occur.

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), which administers BCAP, will begin accepting applications from biomass conversion facilities beginning June 16, 2014, through July 14, 2014. Information on funding availability can be found in the Federal Register notice at <http://go.usa.gov/8FSH>. For more details on applications and deadlines on BCAP, visit a local FSA county office or go online to www.fsa.usda.gov/bcap.

Report Crops before the July 15, 2014, Acreage Reporting Deadline

In order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements, all producers are encouraged to visit their local County FSA office to file an accurate crop certification report by the applicable deadline. The following 2014 acreage reporting dates are applicable for Alabama:

November 15, 2013: Apiculture, PRF/Perennial Forage, Onions
January 15, 2014: Blueberries, Canola, Rapeseed, Fall Oats, Peaches, Fall Wheat
March 15, 2014: Pecans, Potatoes (planted 1/1-3/1)
May 15, 2014: Sweet Corn, Potatoes (planted 3/2-4/15), Tobacco, Tomatoes
July 15, 2014: All other crops

The following exceptions apply to the above acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the above acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the above acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.
- If a perennial forage crop is reported with the intended use of "cover only," "green manure," "left standing," or "seed," then the acreage must be reported by July 15th.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP covered crops is the earlier of the dates listed above or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

For questions regarding crop certification and crop loss reports, please contact your local County FSA office.

USDA Announces Changes to Fruit, Vegetable and Wild Rice Planting Rules

Farm Service Agency (FSA) has announced fruit, vegetable and wild rice provisions that affect producers who intend to participate in certain programs authorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014.

Producers who intend to participate in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs are subject to an acre-for-acre payment reduction when fruits and nuts, vegetables or wild rice are planted on the payment acres of a farm. Payment reductions do not apply to mung beans, dry peas, lentils or chickpeas. Planting fruits, vegetables or wild rice on acres that are not considered payment acres will not result in a payment reduction. Farms that are eligible to participate in ARC/PLC but are not enrolled for a particular year may plant unlimited fruits, vegetables and wild rice for that year but will not receive ARC/PLC payments for that year. Eligibility for succeeding years is not affected.

Planting and harvesting fruits, vegetables and wild rice on ARC/PLC acreage is subject to the acre-for-acre payment reduction when those crops are planted on either more than 15 percent of the base acres of a farm enrolled in ARC using the county coverage or PLC, or more than 35 percent of the base acres of a farm enrolled in ARC using the individual coverage.

Fruits, vegetables and wild rice that are planted in a double-cropping practice will not cause a payment reduction if the farm is in a double-cropping region as designated by the USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation.

Guaranteed Loan Eligibility

Changes to FSA regulations have removed Guaranteed Operating Loan term limits. Previous and current guaranteed loan borrowers who were not eligible for further guaranteed loans due to the previous 15 year eligibility term limit may now be eligible for further guaranteed loans through their commercial lender.

Direct Loan Changes

Changes were made to the interest rate charged on loans where FSA provides 50 percent or less on jointly financed purchases of real estate; also called Direct Farm Ownership Participation Loans. The interest rate will be the greater of 2.5 percent or the current interest rate for direct Farm Ownership loans minus 2 percent, as a fixed rate for the duration of the loan. At present, the June direct Farm Ownership rate is 4.00 percent. Because the 2.5 percent floor is greater than subtracting 2 percent from the current direct farm ownership loan rate, the rate for Direct Farm Ownership Participation Loans in June is 2.50 percent.

Livestock Disaster Assistance Sign-up Underway

Livestock disaster program enrollment opened on April 15, 2014. These disaster programs are authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill as permanent programs and provide retroactive authority to cover losses that occurred on or after Oct. 1, 2011.

To expedite applications, all producers who experienced losses are encouraged to bring records documenting those losses to their local FSA Office. Producers should record all pertinent information of natural disaster consequences, including:

- Documentation of the number and kind of livestock that have died, supplemented if possible by photographs or video records of ownership and losses
- Dates of death supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts
- Costs of transporting livestock to safer grounds or to move animals to new pastures
- Feed purchases if supplies or grazing pastures are destroyed
- Crop records, including seed and fertilizer purchases, planting and production records

Eligible producers can sign-up for the following livestock disaster assistance programs:

- **Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP)**
- **Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)**
- **Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) - Note:** ELAP assistance is provided for losses not covered by LFP and LIP. Producers who suffered eligible livestock, honeybee or farm-raised fish losses during 2012 and 2013 program years must submit a notice of loss and application for payment to their local FSA office by **August 1, 2014**. For 2014 program year losses, the notice of loss and an application for payment must be submitted by November 1, 2014.

For more information, producers can review the LFP, LIP and ELAP Fact Sheets on the [Farm Bill webpage](#). Producers are encouraged to make an appointment with their local FSA office to apply for these programs.

Hay Net

Producers are encouraged to use Hay Net on the FSA website (<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/haynet>). This online service allows producers with hay and those who need hay to post ads so they can make connections. Hay Net is a popular site for farmers and ranchers who have an emergency need. Individual ads can be posted free of charge by producers who complete a simple online registration form the first time they use the site.

Farm Reconstitutions

When changes in farm ownership or operation take place, a farm reconstitution is necessary. The reconstitution — or recon — is the process of combining or dividing farms or tracts of land based on the farming operation.

The following are the different methods used when doing a farm recon.

- **Estate Method** — the division of bases, allotments and quotas for a parent farm among heirs in settling an estate;
- **Designation of Landowner Method** — may be used when (1) part of a farm is sold or ownership is transferred; (2) an entire farm is sold to two or more persons; (3) farm ownership is transferred to two or more persons; (4) part of a tract is sold or ownership is transferred; (5) a tract is sold to two or more persons; or (6) tract ownership is transferred to two or more persons. In order to use this method the land sold must have been owned for at least three years, or a waiver granted, and the buyer and seller must sign a Memorandum of Understanding;
- **DCP Cropland Method** — the division of bases in the same proportion that the DCP cropland for each resulting tract relates to the DCP cropland on the parent tract;
- **Default Method** — the division of bases for a parent farm with each tract maintaining the bases attributed to the tract level when the reconstitution is initiated in the system

USDA Kicks off the 2014 "Feds Feed Families" Nationwide Food Drive

USDA kicked off the 6th annual Feds Feed Families Campaign on June 2, 2014.

The food drive is an annual event in which Federal employees, nationwide, collect food for distribution by food banks, food pantries, and shelters.

The Feds Feed Families program started in 2009. The 2014 food drive officially began on June 2 and will run through August 27.

All Federal agencies across the country participate in the campaign and Federal employees are asked to donate non-perishable food items throughout the summer. Donations are given to local food banks across the country – having a positive impact to help food banks address food insecurity. Secretary Vilsack noted that the latest USDA estimates show that in 2012, food insecurity affected 14.5 percent of American households at some point.

If you are interested in making a donation to the annual "Feds Feed Families" Food Drive, please contact your local USDA Service Center office.

For more information on the Feds Feed Families campaign, please visit: <http://www.usda.gov/fedsfeedfamilies>.

Special Accommodations Are Available

Reasonable accommodations will be made, upon request, for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment, or hearing impairment to attend or participate in meetings or events sponsored by the Farm Service Agency. If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in one of our events, please call the FSA county office and we will be happy to make any needed arrangements

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. 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).