

January 2015



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- [Mississippi FSA Announces New Yield Data for Safety Net Calculations](#)
- [FSA Offers Farm Bill Website and Online Overview of Farm Bill Programs](#)
- [USDA Disaster Assistance to Help Thousands of Honeybee, Livestock and Farm-Raised Fish Producers](#)
- [Greater Protection Available for Fruit, Vegetable and Other Specialty Crop Growers](#)
- [2015 Acreage Reporting Dates](#)
- [Livestock Disaster Assistance Sign-Up](#)
- [Tree Assistance Program \(TAP\) Sign-up Continues](#)
- [New Farm Bill Offers Increased Opportunities for Producers](#)
- [Microloan Cap Grows to \\$50,000](#)
- [Beginning Farmer Loans](#)

Mississippi FSA January Newsletter

USDA Mississippi Farm Service Agency (FSA)

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Levon Owens
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State Executive Director:

Michael R. Sullivan

Next State Committee Meeting:

Mississippi FSA Announces New Yield Data for Safety Net Calculations

Farmers can Update Yield History through Feb. 27, 2015

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers farmers new information to update program payment yields that will help them better select protections offered by the Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs. The new programs, established by the 2014 Farm Bill, are cornerstones of the commodity farm safety, offering farmers protection when market forces cause substantial drops in crop prices and revenues.

The Farm Bill provides landowners with the option of updating their farm program payment yields and this is the first time that many producers have been able to

January 14, 2015 @ 10:00 A.M.

Upcoming Farm Bill Meetings:

January 12, 2015

Adams County

Adams Co. Extension Office

75 Carthage Point Road

Natchez, MS 39120

10:00 A.M. - 12:00 Noon

January 20, 2015

Claiborne/Jefferson Counties

Claiborne County Extension Service

510 Market Street (Matt Ross Bldg.)

Port Gibson, MS

10:00 A.M. - 12:00 Noon

January 26, 2015

Washington County

MSU Delta Branch Experiment Station

Stoneville, MS

10:00 A.M. - 12:00 Noon

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in these meetings should contact the County Executive Director of the local office or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339.

Local Offices:

Adams County (601) 445-8621 Ext. 2

Claiborne/Jefferson (601) 437-8121 Ext. 2

Washington County(601) 334-9472 Ext. 2

To learn more about upcoming educational meetings, farmers can contact their local Farm Service Agency county office at

<http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>.

update yields since 1986. FSA has worked with the Risk Management Agency (RMA) to make available certified yield data that producers can use to better calculate how the new safety net programs can offer the best protection against market swings.

Producers can check with their local FSA county office to see if data is available for them. This data belongs to the producer and only the producer associated with the crop insurance records will be provided this service. Updating yield history or reallocating base acres can occur until Feb. 27, 2015.

FSA also issued a reminder that from Nov. 17, 2014, to March 31, 2015, producers will make a one-time election of either ARC or PLC for the 2014 through 2018 crop years. For more information, producers are encouraged to make an appointment to go into their local FSA county office. To find a local FSA county office, visit offices.usda.gov. Additional information on the new programs is available at www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.

FSA Offers Farm Bill Website and Online Overview of Farm Bill Programs

The Agricultural Act of 2014 (the Act), also known as the 2014 Farm Bill, was signed by President Obama on Feb. 7, 2014. The Act repeals certain programs, continues some programs with modifications, and authorizes several new programs administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA). Most of these programs are authorized and funded through 2018.

For the latest on 2014 Farm Bill programs administered by FSA, please visit our Farm Bill website at www.fsa.usda.gov/farmbill and for an FSA program overview please read, download and/or print our recently posted FSA Farm Bill Fact Sheet titled, [What's in the 2014 Farm Bill for Farm Service Agency Customers?](#)

For more information on FSA, please contact your local USDA Service Center or visit us online at www.fsa.usda.gov.

USDA Disaster Assistance to Help Thousands of Honeybee, Livestock and Farm-Raised Fish Producers

2014 Farm Bill Program Offers Producers in Over 40 States Relief for 2012 and 2013 Losses

Nearly 2,500 applicants will receive disaster assistance through the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) for losses suffered from Oct. 1, 2011, through Sept. 30, 2013.

The program, re-authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill, provides disaster relief to livestock, honeybee, and farm-raised fish producers not covered by other agricultural disaster assistance programs. Eligible losses may include excessive heat or winds, flooding, blizzards, hail, wildfires, lightning strikes, volcanic eruptions, and diseases, or in the case of honeybees, losses due to colony collapse disorder. Beekeepers, most of whom suffered honeybee colony losses, represent more than half of ELAP recipients.

The Farm Bill caps ELAP disaster funding at \$20 million per federal fiscal year. To accommodate the number of requests, which exceeded funds available for each of the affected years, payments will be reduced to ensure that all eligible applicants receive a prorated share of assistance.

The following ELAP Fact Sheets (by topic) are available online:

- ELAP for Farm-Raised Fish Fact Sheet
- ELAP for Livestock Fact Sheet
- ELAP for Honeybees Fact Sheet

To view these and other FSA program fact sheets, visit the FSA fact sheet web page at www.fsa.usda.gov/factsheets.

For local FSA Service Center contact information, please visit: offices.usda.gov.

Greater Protection Available for Fruit, Vegetable and Other Specialty Crop Growers

Free Basic Coverage Plans and Premium Discounts Available for New, Underserved and Limited Income Farmers

Greater protection is now available from the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program for crops that historically have been ineligible for federal crop insurance. The new options, created by the 2014 Farm Bill, provide greater coverage for losses when natural disasters affect specialty crops such as vegetables, fruits, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, and energy crops.

Previously, the program offered coverage at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production. Producers can now choose higher levels of coverage, up to 65 percent of their expected production at 100 percent of the average market price.

The expanded protection will be especially helpful to beginning and socially disadvantaged producers, as well as farmers with limited resources, who will receive fee waivers and premium reductions for expanded coverage. More crops are now eligible for the program, including expanded aquaculture production practices, and sweet and biomass sorghum. For the first time, a range of crops used to produce bioenergy will be eligible as well.

To help producers learn more about the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program and how it can help them, USDA, in partnership with Michigan State University and the University of Illinois, created an online resource. The Web tool, available at www.fsa.usda.gov/nan, allows producers to

determine whether their crops are eligible for coverage. It also gives them an opportunity to explore a variety of options and levels to determine the best protection level for their operation.

If the application deadline for an eligible crop has already passed, **producers will have until Jan. 14, 2015**, to choose expanded coverage through the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program. To learn more, visit the Farm Service Agency (FSA) website at www.fsa.usda.gov/nap or contact your local FSA office at offices.usda.gov. The Farm Service Agency (FSA), which administers the program, also wants to hear from producers and other interested stakeholders who may have suggestions or recommendations on the program. Written comments will be accepted until Feb. 13, 2015 and can be submitted through www.regulations.gov.

2015 Acreage Reporting Dates

In order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements, all producers are encouraged to visit the local county FSA office to file an accurate crop certification report by the applicable deadline.

The following acreage reporting dates are applicable for Mississippi:

January 15, 2015: Blueberries, Grapes, and Peaches

March 15, 2015: Pecans

July 15, 2015: Spring seeded crops such as corn, cotton, rice, soybeans, and warm season grasses

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.

Livestock Disaster Assistance Sign-Up

Livestock disaster assistance 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 October 1, 2011. These programs include:

- Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP): LFP provides compensation to eligible livestock producers that have suffered grazing losses due to drought on privately owned or leased land, or fire on federally managed land. Eligible producers must physically be located in a county affected by qualifying drought during the normal grazing period for the county. For

the County to qualify for these benefits, some portion of the county must have been rated on the U. S. Drought Monitor at a level of at least D2 for 8 consecutive weeks, or a D3 or higher at any time during the grazing period. Eligible producers located in those qualifying counties should submit a completed CCC-853 and supporting documentation to their FSA County Office by no later than January 30, 2015

- Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP): LIP provides compensation to eligible livestock producers that have suffered livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the Federal government or protected by Federal law. Producers who suffered livestock death losses between October 1, 2011, and December 31, 2014, should submit a notice of loss and application for payment to their local FSA office by no later than January 30, 2015. Producers must provide documentation of the number and kind of livestock that died, supplemented if possible by photographs and proof of ownership records
- Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP): ELAP provides emergency assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybees and farm-raised fish that have suffered losses due to adverse weather, or other conditions, such as blizzards and wildfires. ELAP assistance is provided for losses not covered by LIP and LFP. The deadline for producers who suffered eligible livestock, honeybee, or farm-raised fish losses during 2012, 2013 and 2014 program years has passed. Producers who suffer losses beginning October 1, 2014, (Fiscal Year 2015) can now submit a notice of loss and application for payment to their local FSA Office. For more information, producers can review the LFP, LIP and ELAP Fact Sheets on the Farm Bill Website. Producers are encouraged to make an appointment with their local FSA Office to apply for these programs

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Tree Assistance Program (TAP) Sign-up Continues

Orchardists and nursery tree growers who experienced losses from natural disasters that occurred on or after Oct. 1, 2011, can sign up for the Tree Assistance Program (TAP). TAP was authorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014 as a permanent disaster program. TAP provides financial assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines damaged by natural disasters.

Eligible tree types include trees, bushes or vines that produce an annual crop for commercial purposes. Nursery trees include ornamental, fruit, nut and Christmas trees that are produced for commercial sale. Trees used for pulp or timber are ineligible.

To qualify for TAP, orchardists must suffer a qualifying tree, bush or vine loss in excess of 15 percent plus normal mortality from an eligible natural disaster. The eligible trees, bushes or vines must have been owned when the natural disaster occurred; however, eligible growers are not required to own the land on which the eligible trees, bushes and vines were planted.

For losses that occurred on or after Oct. 1, 2011, through the end of the 2014 calendar year, the final date to submit an application and supporting documentation is the later of Jan. 31, 2015 or 90 calendar days after the disaster event or the date the loss is apparent. For calendar year 2015 and subsequent losses, all applications and supporting documentation must be submitted the later of 90 calendar days after the disaster event or the date the loss is apparent.

If the TAP application is approved, the eligible trees, bushes and vines must be replaced within 12 months from the date the application is approved. The cumulative total quantity of acres planted to trees, bushes or vines, for which a producer can receive TAP payments, cannot exceed 500 acres annually.

New Farm Bill Offers Increased Opportunities for Producers

The 2014 Farm Bill offers increased opportunities for producers including farm loan program modifications that create flexibility for new and existing farmers. A fact sheet outlining modifications to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) Farm Loan Programs is available [here](#).

The Farm Bill expands lending opportunities for thousands of farmers and ranchers to begin and continue operations, including greater flexibility in determining eligibility, raising loan limits, and emphasizing beginning and socially disadvantaged producers.

Changes that will take effect immediately include:

- Elimination of the 15 year term limit for guaranteed operating loans
- Modification of the definition of beginning farmer, using the average farm size for the county as a qualifier instead of the median farm size
- Modification of the Joint Financing Direct Farm Ownership Interest Rate to 2 percent less than regular Direct Farm Ownership rate, with a floor of 2.5 percent. Previously, the rate was established at 5 percent
- Increase of the maximum loan amount for Direct Farm Ownership Down Payment Loan Program from \$225,000 to \$300,000
- Elimination of rural residency requirement for Youth Loans, allowing urban youth to benefit.
- Allow a borrower who had youth loan debt forgiveness to receive future government loans under certain circumstances
- Increase of the guaranteed percentage on Conservation Loans from 75 to 80 percent and 90 percent for socially disadvantaged borrowers and beginning farmers
- Microloans will not count toward direct operating loan term limits for veterans and beginning farmers

Additional modifications must be implemented through the rulemaking processes. Visit the [FSA Farm Bill website](#) for detailed information and updates to farm loan programs.

Microloan Cap Grows to \$50,000

Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds farmers and ranchers that the FSA borrowing limit for microloans increased from \$35,000 to \$50,000, effective Nov. 7. Microloans offer borrowers simplified lending with less paperwork.

The microloan change allows beginning, small and mid-sized farmers to access an additional \$15,000 in loans using a simplified application process with up to seven years to repay. Microloans are part of USDA's continued commitment to [small and midsized farming operations](#).

To complement the microloan program additional changes to FSA eligibility requirements will enhance beginning farmers and ranchers access to land, a key barrier to entry level producers. FSA policies related to farm experience have changed so that other types of skills may be considered to meet the direct farming experience required for farm ownership loan eligibility. Operation or management of non-farm businesses, leadership positions while serving in the military or advanced

education in an agricultural field will now count towards the experience applicants need to show when applying for farm ownership loans. **Important Note:** Microloans cannot be used to purchase real estate.

Since 2010, FSA has made a record amount of farm loans — more than 165,000 loans totaling nearly \$23 billion. More than 50 percent of USDA's farm loans now go to beginning farmers. In addition, FSA has increased its lending to socially-disadvantaged producers by nearly 50 percent since 2010.

Please review the FSA [Microloan Program Fact Sheet](#) for program application, eligibility and related information.

Beginning Farmer Loans

FSA assists beginning farmers to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:

- Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years
- Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm
- Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA
- Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's average size farm.

Additional program information, loan applications, and other materials are available at your local USDA Service Center. You may also visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

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).