



NEWSLETTER



August 2015

Oklahoma FSA Program Updates and Reminders

Lyndal Stoup
Acting State Executive
Director

100 USDA, Suite 102
Stillwater, OK 74074
405-742-1130 phone
855-416-9557 fax
www.fsa.usda.gov/ok

Hours:
Monday - Friday
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

State Committee Members:

Cletus Carter, Beaver
(Chairman)
Steve Nunley, Marlow
Brenda Neufeld, Fairview
Steve Butler, Wagoner
Jo Jennings, Depew

State Staff:

Phil Estes,
Farm Loan Programs

Tona Huggins,
Production & Payment
Eligibility

Rod Wanger,
Conservation Programs

Danny Lee,
Compliance & Price Support

Krey Reimer,
Administration

Shelly Bilderback,
Public Relations/Outreach

September 30th Deadline for ARC/PLC Enrollment Quickly Approaching

The enrollment period for the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for 2014 and 2015, will end Sept. 30, 2015. **Producers should contact their local FSA to ensure they have signed program contracts before Sept. 30th.**

The new programs, established by the 2014 Farm Bill, trigger financial protections for agricultural producers when market forces cause substantial drops in crop prices or revenues. More than 1.76 million farmers have elected ARC or PLC. Previously, 1.7 million producers had enrolled to receive direct payments (the program replaced with ARC and PLC by the 2014 Farm Bill). This means more farms have elected ARC or PLC than enrolled under previously administered programs.

Land owners were given the opportunity to do yield updates/base reallocations, then elected either the ARC or PLC program. This final step is enrollment by anyone with an interest in a crop on a farm that has historical base acres.

All producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office to schedule an appointment to complete the enrollment process and sign the program contracts.

2015 Livestock Disaster Assistance Available

Livestock producers in eligible counties are encouraged to schedule an appointment with their local FSA office to sign up for the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) which provides payments to eligible livestock producers for grazing losses due to drought, or fire on federal lands.

Producers in Alfalfa, Beaver, Beckham, Blaine, Caddo, Canadian, Carter, Cimarron, Comanche, Cotton, Creek, Custer, Dewey, Ellis, Garfield, Grady, Grant, Greer, Harmon, Harper, Jackson, Jefferson, Kay, Kingfisher, Kiowa, Logan, Love, Major, Noble, Osage, Payne, Pawnee, Roger Mills, Stephens, Texas, Tillman, Tulsa, Washita, Woods, and Woodward counties are eligible to apply for 2015 LFP benefits.

For 2015 and subsequent years, eligible livestock producers must complete a CCC-853 and the required supporting documentation no later than 30 calendar days after the end of the calendar year in which the grazing losses occurred. Losses must occur in the calendar year the application is being filed.

Additional Information about LFP, including eligible livestock and fire criteria, is available at your local FSA office or online at: www.fsa.usda.gov/lfp.

USDA Announces Conservation Incentives for Working Grass, Range and Pasture Lands

Beginning September 1, farmers and ranchers can apply for financial assistance to help conserve working grasslands, rangeland and pastureland while maintaining the areas as livestock grazing lands.

The initiative is part of the voluntary Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), a federally funded program that for 30 years has assisted agricultural producers with the cost of restoring, enhancing and protecting certain grasses, shrubs and trees to improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and reduce loss of wildlife habitat. In return, USDA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. CRP has helped farmers and ranchers prevent more than 8 billion tons of soil from eroding, reduce nitrogen and phosphorous runoff relative to cropland by 95 and 85 percent respectively, and even sequester 43 million tons of greenhouse gases annually, equal to taking 8 million cars off the road.

The CRP-Grasslands initiative will provide participants who establish long-term, resource-conserving covers with annual rental payments up to 75 percent of the grazing value of the land. Cost-share assistance also is available for up to 50 percent of the covers and other practices, such as cross fencing to support rotational grazing or improving pasture cover to benefit pollinators or other wildlife. Participants may still conduct common grazing practices, produce hay, mow, or harvest for seed production, conduct fire rehabilitation, and construct firebreaks and fences.

FSA will accept applications on an ongoing basis beginning Sept. 1, 2015, with those applications scored against published ranking criteria, and approved based on the competitiveness of the offer. The ranking period will occur at least once per year and be announced at least 30 days prior to its start. The end of the first ranking period will be Nov. 20, 2015.

To learn more about participating in CRP-Grasslands or SAFE, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/crp or consult with your local FSA office.

Cotton Transition Assistance Program Enrollment Deadline is Sept. 30th

September 30, 2015 is the final date for producers to enroll in the 2015 Cotton Transition Assistance Program (CTAP). Eligible Oklahoma counties include: Creek, Hughes, Johnston, LeFlore, Logan, McCurtain, McIntosh, Major, Okmulgee, Pittsburg, Sequoyah, and Wagoner.

CTAP provides interim payments to cotton producers in counties where the Stacked Income Protection Plan (STAX), a new insurance product administered by the Risk Management Agency, is not yet available. Most cotton-producing counties and cotton producers have STAX available and are not eligible for CTAP.

The Cotton Transition Assistance Program is for farms with former cotton base acres that are physically located in a county where the Stacked Income Protection Plan is unavailable. Cotton producers are encouraged to schedule an appointment with FSA as soon as possible.

USDA Encourages Producers to Consider Risk Protection Coverage before Fall Crop Sales Deadlines

Disaster Assistance is Available for Crops that are Ineligible for Federal Insurance

FSA encourages producers to examine the available USDA crop risk protection options, including federal crop insurance and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage, before the sales deadline for fall crops.

Deadlines are quickly approaching to purchase coverage for fall-seeded crops. Producers are reminded that crops not covered by insurance may be eligible for the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program. The 2014 Farm Bill expanded NAP to include higher levels of protection. Beginning, underserved and limited resource farmers are now eligible for free catastrophic level coverage, as well as discounted premiums for additional levels of protection.

Federal crop insurance covers crop losses from natural adversities such as drought, hail and excessive moisture. NAP covers losses from natural disasters on crops for which no permanent federal crop insurance program is available, including forage and grazing crops, fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, bioenergy, and industrial crops.

Upcoming NAP Application Closing Dates:

September 30 - Apples, Barley-Grain, Blackberries, Blueberries, Grapes, Greens (including Spinach), Nectarines, Oats-Grain, Peaches, Pears, Raspberries, Rye-Grain, Triticale-Grain, Vetch and Wheat-Grain.

November 30 - Asparagus, Clover-Forage, Grass-Forage, Honey, Lespedeza, Mixed Forage-Forage, Pecans, Plums.

USDA has partnered with Michigan State University and the University of Illinois to create an online tool at www.fsa.usda.gov/nap that allows producers to determine whether their crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP and to explore the best level of protection for their operation. NAP basic coverage is available at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production, with higher levels of coverage, up to 65 percent of their expected production at 100 percent of the average market price, including coverage for organics and crops marketed directly to consumers.

Federal crop insurance coverage is sold and delivered solely through private insurance agents. Agent lists are available at all USDA Service Centers or at USDA's online Agent Locator: <http://prodwebnlb.rma.usda.gov/apps/AgentLocator/#>. Producers can use the USDA Cost Estimator, <https://ewebapp.rma.usda.gov/apps/costestimator/Default.aspx>, to predict insurance premium costs.

FSA Offers Financial Assistance to Beginning Farmers

FSA assists beginning farmers in financing 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.

FSA encourages all interested applicants to apply for direct or guaranteed loans. To learn more, contact your local FSA office to set up an appointment with a loan official. Additionally, you can visit our [Farm Loan Website](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans) www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans for more information and to access applications.

USDA Adds More Eligible Commodities for Farm Storage Facility Loans

New Provisions Increase On-Farm Storage for Dairy, Flowers, Meats

The Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program, which provides low-interest financing to producers to build or upgrade storage facilities, will now include dairy, flowers and meats as eligible commodities.

For 15 years, the FSFL program has provided affordable financing, allowing American farmers and ranchers to construct or expand storage on the farm and by adding eligible commodities; these low-interest loans will help even more family farmers and ranchers to expand on-site storage.

The new commodities eligible for facility loans include floriculture, hops, rye, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, meat and poultry (unprocessed), eggs, and aquaculture (excluding systems that maintain live animals through uptake and discharge of water). Commodities already eligible for the loans include corn, grain sorghum, rice, soybeans, oats, peanuts, wheat, barley, minor oilseeds harvested as whole grain, pulse crops (lentils, chickpeas and dry peas), hay, honey, renewable biomass, and fruits, nuts and vegetables for cold storage facilities.

Producers do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply. The loans are designed to assist a diverse range of farming operations, including small and mid-sized businesses, new farmers, operations supplying local food and farmers markets, non-traditional farm products, and underserved producers.

USDA Announces Incentives to Establish Biomass Crops

Farmers and forest landowners seeking financial assistance for growing new sources of biomass for energy or biobased products within designated projects areas, can now apply for funds available from the Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP), which was reauthorized by the 2014 Farm Bill.

Biomass energy facilities or groups of producers may submit proposals for new BCAP project areas. Proposals will be accepted on www.grants.gov through Nov. 6, 2015. USDA will also allocate \$7.7 million towards four existing BCAP project areas in New York, North Carolina, Ohio/Pennsylvania and Kansas/Oklahoma, targeting the establishment of an additional 10,500 acres of shrub willow, giant miscanthus, and switchgrass for energy. Project area sponsors include Chemtex International, Aloterra Energy LLC, Abengoa Biomass LLC and ReEnergy Holdings LLC. Farmers and forest landowners may enroll for biomass establishment and maintenance payments for these four sites through Sept. 25, 2015.

The 2014 Farm Bill authorizes funding each year for the program to assist with the establishment and delivery of biomass for energy or biobased products. To date, BCAP has provided incentives for producers across more than 48,000 acres in 71 counties and 11 different project areas.

Farm Loan Interest Rates

- Farm Operating Loans = 2.625%
- Farm Ownership Loans = 4.00%
- Farm Ownership Down Payment Loans = 1.5%
- Farm Ownership Joint Financing Loans = 2.5%
- Micro Loans = 2.625%
- Youth Loans = 2.625%
- Emergency Loans = 3.625%

*Rates effective September 1, 2015