

**For:** State and County Offices

**Letter for CRP Participants and Signup 26 Fact Sheet Mailed by KCAO**

**Approved by:** Acting Deputy Administrator, Farm Programs



**1 Overview**

**A Background**

Before signup 26, KCAO mailed a letter to CRP participants with expiring CRP-1's. One letter was sent to each participant for every administering county with 1 or more of these CRP-1's.

Land enrolled in CRP, which is scheduled to expire on September 30, 2003, or September 30, 2004, may be eligible to be offered for re-enrollment under signup 26 provided that all eligibility criteria are met. A Signup 26 Fact Sheet has been developed that provides information about signup 26. A copy of this fact sheet was included with the letter mailed to these participants.

**B Purpose**

This notice:

- informs State and County Offices that a letter (Exhibit 1) has been mailed by KCAO to all CRP participants with CRP-1's that are scheduled to expire on September 30, 2003, or September 30, 2004
- provides a copy of the Signup 26 Fact Sheet (Exhibit 2) mailed with the letter in Exhibit 1, which is also to be provided by County Offices to all CRP participants that submit an offer during signup 26.

<b>Disposal Date</b>	<b>Distribution</b>
June 1, 2003	State Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices and NRCS State Offices

## Notice CRP-433

### 2 Action

#### A County Office Action

County Offices shall:

- review the letter and Signup 26 Fact Sheet with the local NRCS staff
- provide each producer submitting an offer for signup 26 a copy of the Signup 26 Fact Sheet

**Note:** A printable version of the fact sheet is available from the CEPD website at [www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/cepd](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/cepd).

- retain a file copy of this notice in the County Office's general CRP folder.

## Letter to CRP Participant



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Farm and Foreign  
Agricultural Services

Farm Service  
Agency

1400 Independence  
Ave, SW  
Washington, DC  
20250

Dear CRP Participant:

In the very near future, you will be making important decisions about your Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contract that will expire either on September 30, 2003, or September 30, 2004. In making those decisions, I urge you to consider options that will preserve the conservation gains you have made over the past ten years. These improvements in soil, water, air quality, and wildlife habitat account for much of the program's widespread popularity.

The CRP's twenty-sixth signup period will be open from May 5, 2003, through May 30, 2003. During this signup, you can offer all or part of the acreage you currently have under contract that is scheduled to expire on September 30, 2003, or September 30, 2004. Other land may also be offered if it meets eligibility requirements. Before making decisions about planting or participating again in the CRP, I encourage you to explore the different ways CRP can enhance your land, water, and wildlife.

You may consider returning to production some or all of your expiring CRP land, or offering different land into the CRP. I strongly encourage you to consider devoting areas of your land to high conservation-valued practices, such as grassed waterways; filter strips; contoured buffer strips; riparian buffers, including marginal pastureland to be devoted to riparian buffers; field windbreaks; shelter belts; or similar practices. Under continuous signup, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) cost-shares with you to establish and maintain these practices which may be enrolled at any time without submitting a competitive offer in this upcoming general signup twenty-six.

If you wish to offer other eligible land, you must do so during this designated CRP signup period. In submitting your CRP offer, choose the best type of cover for your land to ensure the highest conservation value. Your offer stands a better chance of being accepted into the CRP if it contains certain practices and cover that benefit water quality and wildlife, and reduce soil erosion. Again, keep in mind that FSA will cost-share with you to establish enhanced quality cover and similar practices.

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## Letter to CRP Participant (Continued)

As you make these important decisions about your CRP acreage, use the expertise available from the Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the local conservation districts. FSA staff can answer many of your questions. Natural Resources Conservation Service and conservation district personnel can also consult with you about land eligibility for CRP, where certain practices or other programs might be used on your farm or ranch, and achieving maximum conservation benefits. Cooperative Extension Service specialists are also available to provide advice on economic and agronomic questions about CRP participation. Another source for CRP information is the FSA Internet Home Page at [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

If your land is expiring from the CRP and returning to production, I urge you to meet with FSA staff before the expiration of your contract to discuss your eligibility for enrolling in the farm program and your obligations under the conservation and wetland compliance program provisions.

The CRP provides producers tremendous opportunities to help reduce topsoil erosion, increase wildlife habitat, and improve air and water quality on our nation's lands. I urge you to use the program's benefits.

Sincerely,



James R. Little  
Administrator  
Farm Service Agency

Signup 26 Fact Sheet



**Farm Service Agency**

Fact Sheet

April 2003



**Conservation Reserve Program Sign-up 26  
May 5 - May 30, 2003**

**Overview**

USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a voluntary program available to agricultural producers to help them safeguard environmentally sensitive land. Producers enrolled in CRP plant long-term, resource-conserving covers to improve the quality of water, control soil erosion, and enhance wildlife habitat. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years.

FSA administers CRP, while other USDA agencies and partners provide technical support. More detailed information on CRP is available in the FSA fact sheet "Conservation Reserve Program."

**CRP Sign-up 26**

FSA will hold CRP sign-up 26 for a four-week period from May 5 to May 30, 2003. This is the first general CRP sign-up since enactment of the 2002 Farm Bill on May 13, 2003. The last general sign-up was conducted in early 2000.

CRP sign-up 26 is the first general sign-up to benefit from new personal computer-based common computing environment (CCE) technology. Through CCE, FSA local offices can, for the first time,

enroll producers and calculate eligible acres and rental rates in an automated environment.

**Submitting CRP Offers**

CRP participants with contracts expiring on September 30, 2003, may submit offers during CRP sign-up 26.

To submit CRP offers, producers must visit their local FSA offices. FSA will accept offers only during the sign-up period (May 5 to May 30, 2003). To find your local FSA office, visit FSA's Web site at: [http://oip.usda.gov/scripts/ndlsapi.dll/oip\\_agency/index?state=us&agency=fsa](http://oip.usda.gov/scripts/ndlsapi.dll/oip_agency/index?state=us&agency=fsa)

NOTE: CRP sign-up 26 does not apply to participation in CRP continuous sign-up, in which land devoted to certain conservation practices may be enrolled at any time. Further information on CRP continuous sign-up is available in the FSA fact sheet "Conservation Reserve Program Continuous Sign-up."

**Eligible Producers**

To be eligible for CRP enrollment, a producer must have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months prior to close of the CRP sign-up period, unless:

- The new owner acquired the land due to the previous owner's death;

- The ownership change occurred due to foreclosure where the owner exercised a timely right of redemption in accordance with state law; or
- The circumstances of the acquisition present adequate assurance to FSA that the new owner did not acquire the land for the purpose of placing it in CRP.

**Eligible Land**

To be eligible for placement in CRP, land must be either:

- Cropland (including field margins) that is planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity 4 of the previous 6 crop years from 1996 to 2001, and which is physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity; or
- Certain marginal pastureland that is enrolled in the Water Bank Program.

**Additional Cropland Requirements**

In addition to the eligible land requirements, cropland must meet one of the following criteria:

- Have a weighted average erosion index of 8 or higher;
- Be expiring CRP acreage; or
- Be located in a national or state CRP conservation priority area.

Signup 26 Fact Sheet (Continued)

**Fact Sheet**

*Conservation Reserve Program Sign-up 26  
May 5 - May 30, 2003*

**CRP Payments**

FSA provides CRP sign-up 26 participants with annual rental payments, including certain incentive payments, and cost-share assistance:

■ **Rental Payments**

In return for establishing long-term, resource-conserving covers, FSA provides rental payments to participants. FSA bases rental rates on the relative productivity of the soils within each county and the average dryland cash rent or cash-rent equivalent. The maximum CRP rental rate for each offer is calculated in advance of enrollment. Producers may offer land at that rate or offer a lower rental rate to increase the likelihood that their offer will be accepted.

■ **Maintenance Incentive Payments**

CRP annual rental payments may include an additional amount up to \$5 per acre per year as an incentive to perform certain maintenance obligations.

■ **Cost-share Assistance**

FSA provides cost-share assistance to participants who establish approved cover on eligible cropland. The cost-share assistance can be an amount not more than 50 percent of the participants' costs in establishing approved practices.

**Ranking CRP Offers**

Offers for CRP sign-up 26 will be ranked according to the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI). FSA collects data for each of the EBI factors based on the relative environmental benefits for the land offered. Each eligible offer is ranked in comparison to all other offers and selections made from that ranking. More information on EBI for CRP sign-up 26 is available in the FSA fact sheet "Conservation Reserve Program Sign-up 26, Environmental Benefits Index."

**For More Information**

For more information on CRP, contact your local FSA office or visit FSA's Web site at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/cepd/crp.htm>

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