U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Virginia July Newsletter Articles and Updates - July 2025

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Receipt for Service - Improving Customer Service

Did you know that, as a customer in any USDA service center, employees are required, per federal law and USDA regulations, to provide you with a computer-generated receipt at the end of your visit? This ***Receipt for Service*** details the type of service you requested, the service and response provided by the staff, and the date and time of your visit.

The 2014 Farm Bill designated that FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Rural Development (RD) employees are statutorily required to provide producers a receipt when a current or prospective producer or landowner interacts or engages with the Agency regarding a USDA benefit or service.

On behalf of our customers, FSA employees are required to enter receipts timely and create only one receipt per customer per visit, regardless of the number of employee interactions a customer may encounter in a single visit. A single receipt will be generated that provides a summary of the customer's visit on behalf of the other employees who also met with the customer on the same day. Employees must also ensure that all services rendered are properly reflected in that receipt.

Issuing a receipt is required by our offices. If you do not receive a receipt, please be sure to request one. For more information, FSA's Receipt for Service handbook is now available online.

Don't leave the office without your receipt!

Certified Mediation Program

The Certified Mediation Program (CMP), administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA), offers mediation services to agricultural producers, creditors, and other parties involved in disputes. Mediation is a voluntary process where a neutral mediator assists the parties in negotiating a mutually acceptable resolution.

CMP aims to improve communication, foster understanding, and resolve conflicts without the need for litigation. This program covers a range of issues, including farm loans, adverse decisions by USDA agencies, rural housing loans, and other agricultural disputes.

Eligible applicants include agricultural producers, creditors, and other stakeholders involved in disputes related to farm loans, USDA program decisions, rural housing loans, and other agricultural issues. Mediation is available to any party seeking to resolve conflicts through a neutral and confidential process. Producers and stakeholders are encouraged to check with their local FSA office or certified state mediation program for specific requirements, application procedures, and additional program details.

Learn more on our Certified Mediation Program webpage.

Payment Limitation

Program payments may be limited by direct attribution to individuals or entities. A legal entity is defined as an entity created under Federal or State law that owns land or an agricultural commodity, product or livestock.

Through direct attribution, payment limitation is based on the total payments received by a person or legal entity, both directly and indirectly.

Payments and benefits under certain FSA programs are subject to some or all of the following:

- payment limitation by direct attribution (including common attribution)
- payment limitation amounts for the applicable programs
- substantive change requirements when a farming operation adds persons, resulting in an increase in persons to which payment limitation applies
- actively engaged in farming requirements
- cash-rent tenant rule
- foreign person rule
- average AGI limitations
- programs subject to AGI limitation

No program benefits subject to payment eligibility and limitation will be provided until all required forms for the specific situation are provided and necessary payment eligibility and payment limitation determinations are made. Payment eligibility and payment limitation determinations may be initiated by the County Committee or requested by the producer.

Statutory and Regulatory rules require persons and legal entities, provide the names and Tax Identification Numbers (TINs) for all persons and legal entities with an ownership interest in the farming operation to be eligible for payment.

Payment eligibility and payment limitation forms submitted by persons and legal entities are subject to spot check through FSA's end-of-year review process. Persons or legal entities selected for end-of-year review must provide the County Committee with operating loan documents, income and expense ledgers, canceled checks for all expenditures, lease and purchase agreements, sales contracts, property tax statements, equipment listings, lease agreements, purchase contracts, documentation of who provided actual labor and management, employee time sheets or books, crop sales documents, warehouse ledgers, gin ledgers, corporate or entity papers, etc.

A finding that a person or legal entity is not actively engaged in farming results in the person or legal entity being ineligible for any payment or benefit subject to the actively engaged in farming rules.

Noncompliance with AGI provisions, either by exceeding the applicable limitation or failure to submit a certification and consent for disclosure statement, will result in payment ineligibility for all program benefits subject to AGI provisions. Program payments are reduced in an amount that is commensurate with the direct and indirect interest held by an ineligible person or legal entity in any legal entity, general partnership, or joint operation that receives benefits subject to the average AGI limitations.

If any changes occur that could affect an actively engaged in farming, cash-rent tenant, foreign person, or average Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) determination, producers must timely notify the County FSA Office by filing revised farm operating plans and/or supporting documentation, as applicable. Failure to timely notify the County Office may adversely affect payment eligibility.

Signature Policy

Using the correct signature when doing business with FSA can save time and prevent a delay in program benefits.

The following are FSA signature guidelines:

- Married individuals must sign their given name.
- Example—Mary Doe and John Doe are married. When signing FSA forms, each must use their given name, and may not sign with the name of their spouse. Mrs. Mary Doe may not sign documents as Mrs. John Doe. For Farm Loan Purposes, spouses may not sign on behalf of the other as an authorized signatory, a signature will be needed for each. For a minor, FSA requires the minor's signature and one from the minor's parent. There are certain exceptions where a minor's signature may be accepted without obtaining the signature of one of the parents. Despite minority status, a youth executing a promissory note for a Youth Loan will incur full personal liability for the debt and will sign individually.

Note: By signing a document with a minor, the parent is liable for actions of the minor and may be liable for refunds, liquidated damages, or other penalties, etc.

When signing on one's behalf the signature must agree with the name typed or printed on the form or be a variation that does not cause the name and signature to be in disagreement. Example - John W. Smith is on the form. The signature may be John W. Smith or J.W. Smith or J. Smith. Or Mary J. Smith may be signed as Mrs. Mary Joe Smith, M.J. Smith, Mary Smith, etc.

FAXED signatures will be accepted for certain forms and other documents provided the acceptable program forms are approved for FAXED signatures. Producers are responsible for the successful transmission and receipt of FAXED information.

Examples of documents not approved for FAXED signatures include:

- Promissory note
- Assignment of payment
- Joint payment authorization
- Acknowledgement of commodity certificate purchase

Spouses may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and CCC programs in which either spouse has an interest, unless written notification denying a spouse this authority has been provided to the county office.

Spouses cannot sign on behalf of each other as an authorized signatory for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations or other similar entities. Likewise, a spouse cannot sign a document on behalf of the other in order to affirm the eligibility of oneself.

Any member of a general partnership can sign on behalf of the general partnership and bind all members unless the Articles of Partnership are more restrictive. Spouses may sign on behalf of each other's individual interest in a partnership, unless notification denying a spouse that authority is provided to the county office. Acceptable signatures for general partnerships, joint ventures, corporations, estates, and trusts must consist of an indicator "by" or "for" the individual's name, individual's name and capacity, or individual's name, capacity, and name of entity.

Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation Compliance

Landowners and operators are reminded that in order to receive payments from USDA, compliance with Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions are required. Farmers with HEL determined soils are reminded of tillage, crop residue, and rotation requirements as specified per their conservation plan. Producers are to notify the USDA Farm Service Agency prior to breaking sod, clearing land (tree removal), and of any drainage projects (tiling, ditching, etc.) to ensure compliance. Failure to update certification of compliance, with form AD-1026, triggering applicable HEL and/or wetland determinations, for any of these situations, can result in the loss of FSA farm program payments, FSA farm loans, NRCS program payments, and premium subsidy to Federal Crop Insurance administered by RMA.

Environmental Review Required Before Project Implementation

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires Federal agencies to consider all potential environmental impacts for federally funded projects before the project is approved.

For all Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs, an environmental review must be completed before actions are approved, such as site preparation or ground disturbance. These programs include, **but are not limited to**, the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program and farm loans. If project implementation begins before FSA has completed an environmental review, the request will be denied. Although there are exceptions regarding the Stafford Act and emergencies, it's important to wait until you receive written approval of your project proposal before starting any actions.

Applications cannot be approved until FSA has copies of all permits and plans. Contact your local FSA office early in your planning process to determine what level of environmental review is required for your program application so that it can be completed timely.

Obtaining Payments Due to Deceased Producers

In order to claim a Farm Service Agency (FSA) payment on behalf of a deceased producer, all program conditions for the payment must have been met before the applicable producer's date of death.

If a producer earned an FSA payment prior to his or her death, the following is the order of precedence for the representatives of the producer:

- administrator or executor of the estate
- the surviving spouse
- surviving sons and daughters, including adopted children
- surviving father and mother
- surviving brothers and sisters
- heirs of the deceased person who would be entitled to payment according to the State law

For FSA to release the payment, the legal representative of the deceased producer must file a form FSA-325 to claim the payment for themselves or an estate. The county office will verify that the application, contract, loan agreement, or other similar form requesting payment issuance, was signed by the applicable deadline by the deceased or a person legally authorized to act on their behalf at that time of application.

If the application, contract or loan agreement form was signed by someone other than the deceased participant, FSA will determine whether the person submitting the form has the legal authority to submit the form.

Payments will be issued to the respective representative's name using the deceased program participant's tax identification number. Payments made to representatives are subject to offset regulations for debts owed by the deceased.

FSA is not responsible for advising persons in obtaining legal advice on how to obtain program benefits that may be due to a participant who has died, disappeared or who has been declared incompetent.

Applying for Farm Storage Facility Loans

The Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program provides low-interest financing to help you build or upgrade storage facilities and to purchase portable (new or used) structures, equipment and storage and handling trucks.

Eligible commodities 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, fruits, nuts and vegetables for cold storage facilities, controlled atmosphere storage, floriculture, hops, malted small grains, maple sap, maple syrup, rye, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, meat and poultry (unprocessed), eggs, and aquaculture (excluding systems that maintain live animals through uptake and discharge of water). Qualified facilities include grain bins, hay barns and cold storage facilities for eligible commodities.

Loans up to $50,000 can be secured by a promissory note/security agreement, loans between $50,000 and $100,000 may require additional security, and loans exceeding $100,000 require additional security.

You 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.

For more information, contact your County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport.

USDA Announces Streamlined Guaranteed Loans and Additional Lender Category for Small-Scale Operators

Options Help More Beginning, Small and Urban Producers Gain Access to Credit

Producers can apply for a streamlined version of USDA guaranteed loans, which are tailored for smaller scale farms and urban producers EZ Guarantee Loans use a simplified application process to help beginning, small, underserved, and family farmers and ranchers apply for loans of up to $100,000 from USDA-approved lenders to purchase farmland or finance agricultural operations.

A new category of lenders will join traditional lenders, such as banks and credit unions, in offering USDA EZ Guarantee Loans. Microlenders, which include Community Development Financial Institutions and Rural Rehabilitation Corporations, will be able to offer their customers up to $50,000 of EZ Guaranteed Loans, helping to reach urban areas and underserved producers. Banks, credit unions and other traditional USDA-approved lenders, can offer customers up to $100,000 to help with agricultural operation costs.

EZ Guarantee Loans offer low interest rates and terms up to seven years for financing operating expenses and 40 years for financing the purchase of farm real estate. USDA-approved lenders can issue these loans with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) guaranteeing the loan up to 95 percent.

For more information about the available types of FSA farm loans, contact your County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov/farmloans.

USDA Packages Disaster Protection with Loans to Benefit Specialty Crop and Diversified Producers

Free basic coverage available for new and underserved loan applicants

Producers who apply for Farm Service Agency (FSA) farm loans will be offered the opportunity to enroll in the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP). NAP is available to producers who grow non-insurable crops and is especially important to fruit, vegetable, and other specialty crop growers. New, underserved and limited income specialty growers who apply for farm loans could qualify for basic loss coverage at no cost.

The basic disaster coverage protects at 55 percent of the market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of production. Covered "specialty" crops include vegetables, fruits, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, hay, forage, grazing and energy crops. FSA allows beginning, underserved or limited income producers to obtain NAP coverage up to 90 days after the normal application closing date when they also apply for FSA credit.

Producers can also protect value-added production, such as organic or direct market crops, at their fair market value in those markets. Targeted underserved groups eligible for free or discounted coverage include American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, and women.

FSA offers a variety of loan products, including farm ownership loans, operating loans and microloans that have a streamlined application process.

NAP coverage is not limited to FSA borrowers, beginning, limited resource, or underserved farmers. Any producer who grows eligible NAP crops can purchase coverage. To learn more, contact your County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov/nap or fsa.usda.gov/farmloans.

Reminders for FSA Direct and Guaranteed Borrowers with Real Estate Security

Farm loan borrowers who have pledged real estate as security for their Farm Service Agency (FSA) direct or guaranteed loans are responsible for maintaining loan collateral. Borrowers must obtain prior consent or approval from FSA or the guaranteed lender for any transaction that affects real estate security. These transactions include, but are not limited to:

- Leases of any kind
- Easements of any kind
- Subordinations
- Partial releases
- Sales

Failure to meet or follow the requirements in the loan agreement, promissory note, and other security instruments could lead to nonmonetary default which could jeopardize your current and future loans.

It is critical that borrowers keep an open line of communication with their FSA loan staff or guaranteed lender when it comes to changes in their operation. For more information on borrower responsibilities, read Your FSA Farm Loan Compass.

NRCS Practice Can Assist Farmers in Controlling Soil Moisture

Water can be tricky, especially in the farming community -- there always seems to be either too much or not enough.

But what if farmers had the ability to actively control the water on their land?

Drainage Water Management (DWM) may be an answer. DWM is a conservation practice that allows farmers to manage the timing and amount of water leaving their fields through a subsurface drainage system. Instead of allowing water to flow freely through the drainage system, farmers can strategically manage it using water control structures, which slow or stop the outflow of water when drainage is not needed. This simple yet powerful adjustment can have far-reaching benefits for both the farm’s productivity and the community’s environmental wellbeing.

At its core, DWM involves placing a water control structure -- typically a series of adjustable boards or gates -- at the outlet of a drainage system. By strategically raising or lowering these barriers, farmers can manage the water table in their fields. During the growing season or periods of heavy precipitation, barriers can be removed to promote proper drainage for planting and field access. During the non-growing season or a drought, boards can be installed to hold water in the soil profile. This stored water can reduce nutrient loss by slowing the movement of water through the soil and keeping valuable nutrients in place for future crops.

Additionally, in times of drought or inconsistent rainfall, fields with managed drainage may be set to retain more moisture, improving crop yields. This contributes to better water quality downstream.

The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers support to farmers interested in implementing DWM. Through technical planning and financial assistance programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), NRCS can help landowners design and install appropriate water control structures tailored to their fields. With the right tools, planning and support, this practice can make a real difference on your farm and beyond. Inquiries about DWM can be directed to your local NRCS field office.

Selected Interest Rates for July 2025

90-Day Treasury Bill	4.125%
Farm Operating Loans — Direct	5.000%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct	5.875%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.875%
Emergency Loans	3.750%
Farm Storage Facility Loans - (7 years)	4.250%
Commodity Loans 1996-Present	5.125%

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https://www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/Virginia/index

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