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Ohio FSA State News and Updates

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Dairy Producers Can Enroll for 2018 Coverage, Secretary Allows Producers to Opt Out

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that dairy producers can enroll for 2018 coverage in the Margin Protection Program (MPP-Dairy). Secretary Sonny Perdue has utilized additional flexibility this year by providing dairy producers the option of opting out of the program for 2018.

To opt out, a producer should not sign up during the annual registration period. By opting out, a producer would not receive any MPP-Dairy benefits if payments are triggered for 2018. Full details will be included in a subsequent Federal Register Notice. The decision would be for 2018 only and is not retroactive.

The voluntary program, established by the 2014 Farm Bill, provides financial assistance to participating dairy producers when the margin – the difference between the price of milk and feed costs – falls below the coverage level selected by the producer.

MPP-Dairy gives participating dairy producers the flexibility to select coverage levels best suited for their operation. Enrollment ends on Dec. 15, 2017, for coverage in calendar year 2018. Participating farmers will remain in the program through Dec. 31, 2018, and pay a minimum $100 administrative fee for 2018

Production Adjustment, Compliance and Risk Management Chief:
Matt Kleski

State Committee:
Bob Boggs, Chairperson
Bob Cole, member
Jim Rex, member
Jim Zumbrink, member

Visit the Ohio FSA website for additional information at: www.fsa.usda.gov/oh

Please contact your FSA County Office for questions specific to your operation.

Current FSA Farm Loan Interest Rates

Current Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) Interest Rates

coverage. Producers have the option of selecting a different coverage level from the previous coverage year during open enrollment.

Dairy operations enrolling in the program must meet conservation compliance provisions and cannot participate in the Livestock Gross Margin Dairy Insurance Program. Producers can mail the appropriate form to the producer's administrative county FSA office, along with applicable fees, without necessitating a trip to the local FSA office. If electing higher coverage for 2018, dairy producers can either pay the premium in full at the time of enrollment or pay 100 percent of the premium by Sept. 1, 2018. Premium fees may be paid directly to FSA or producers can work with their milk handlers to remit premiums on their behalf.

USDA has a web tool to help producers determine the level of coverage under the MPP-Dairy that will provide them with the strongest safety net under a variety of conditions. The online resource, available at www.fsa.usda.gov/mpptool, allows dairy farmers to quickly and easily combine unique operation data and other key variables to calculate their coverage needs based on price projections. Producers can also review historical data or estimate future coverage based on data projections. The secure site can be accessed via computer, Smartphone, tablet or any other platform, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

For more information, visit FSA online at www.fsa.usda.gov/dairy or stop by your FSA County office to learn more about the MPP-Dairy.

Farmers Encouraged to Sign-Up for the Lake Erie CREP

This is an opportune time to take another look at your farming operation and determine if there are areas that could benefit from the establishment of one or more conservation practices.

For instance, do you have a ditch or stream running through your farm that needs a filter strip? Is a particular field prone to wind erosion and stands to benefit from a windbreak? How about that one area that's hard to farm because it's always wet? Have you considered how FSA's Lake Erie Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (Lake Erie CREP) might benefit your farming operation and help to protect the environment at the same time?

Lake Erie CREP began with the main objective to improve water quality in all of our rivers, streams, and tributaries within the Lake Erie watershed with a special emphasis on the Blanchard and Tiffin Rivers as important tributaries of the Maumee River. These conservation practices will target environmentally sensitive areas to reduce sediments and nutrients, prevent water pollution and minimize the risk of flooding and improve the habitat for multiple wildlife species.

Conservation is voluntary. It is entirely up to the landowner or the farm operator to enroll acres in a particular program. Through our federal partnerships it is quite possible that we can have a conservation plan in place before this spring's planting. Farmers and landowners can choose from a number of practices including grass buffer strips, hardwood tree plantings, wildlife habitat, wetlands and windbreaks that work together to prevent chemicals, soils and other contaminants from running off of cropland and into waterways. Also, participants can earn money on less economically viable land, such as land along ditch banks, streams, and woodlands.

In exchange for installing and maintaining these practices, you will earn a guaranteed annual rental payment for 14 to 15 years plus receive cost share and potential incentives to cover the majority of the cost of practice installation. The annual income from the conservation practice will be similar to what is paid for cash rent on the three predominant soils of the CREP practice area. Additional soil rental rate incentives are also available. Also, FSA can provide you with an estimate of the payments you would be eligible to receive for the duration of the contract period (14-15 years).

The Lake Erie CREP is available in 27 counties including; Allen, Ashland, Auglaize, Crawford, Defiance, Erie, Fulton, Hancock, Hardin, Henry, Huron, Lucas, Lorain, Marion, Medina, Mercer, Ottawa, Paulding, Putnam, Richland, Sandusky, Seneca, Shelby, Van Wert, Williams, Wood and Wyandot Counties.

Sign-up for the Lake Erie CREP is going on now. Interested landowners and farmers should contact their FSA County office or the SWCD office to learn more about the Lake Erie CREP.

Direct Farm Ownership Loan Program - Low Interest Loans Can Help Producers Start or Expand Farms

The FSA reminds anyone interested that there is funding available for eligible farmers for low interest loans through FSA's direct farm ownership program.

Eligible producers can borrow up to $300,000 in direct farm ownership loans to buy or enlarge a farm, construct new farm buildings or improve structures, pay closing costs, or promote soil and water conservation and protection. The interest rate on select loans can be as low as 1.5 percent with up to 40 years to repay.

New and beginning farmers, military veterans, and underserved farmers also are encouraged to apply. Each year Congress targets 80 percent of available loan funds to beginning and targeted underserved farmers and producers. Targeted underserved groups include American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians, or other Pacific Islanders, Hispanics and women.

To find out more about the FSA direct farm loan program or other loans available, contact your FSA County office to setup an appointment with a Loan Approval Official.

FSAfarm+, FSA's Customer Self-Service Portal

The USDA FSA has launched a tool to provide farmers with remote access to their personal farm information using their home computers. Farmers and producers can now view, print or export their personal farm data all without visiting an FSA county office.

The program, known as **FSA**farm+, provides you with secure access to view your personal FSA data, such as base and yields, Conservation Reserve Program data, other conservation program acreage, Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation status information, field boundaries, farm imagery, name and address details, contact information and membership interest and shares in the operation. This data will be available in real time, at no cost to the producer and allow operators and owners to export and print farm records, including maps. Producers also can electronically share their data with a crop insurance agent from their own personal computer.

Farm operators and owners first will need "Level 2 eAuthentication" to access the webportal. This level of security ensures that personal information is protected for each user. Level 2 access can be obtained by going to www.eauth.usda.gov, completing the required information and then visiting your local FSA office to finalize access.

For more information on **FSA**farm+, the customer self-service portal, contact your FSA County office.

Census of Agriculture Countdown Begins for America's Farmers

America's farmers will soon have the opportunity to strongly represent agriculture in their communities and industry by taking part in the 2017 Census of Agriculture. Conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the census, to be mailed at the end of this year, is a complete count of all U.S. farms and those who operate them.

The Census of Agriculture highlights land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures, and other topics. The 2012 Census of Agriculture revealed that over three million farmers operated more than two million farms, spanning over 914 million acres. This was a four percent decrease in the number of U.S. farms from the previous census in 2007. However, agriculture sales, income, and expenses increased between 2007 and 2012. This telling information and thousands of other agriculture statistics are a direct result of responses to the Census of Agriculture.

Producers who are new to farming or did not receive a Census of Agriculture in 2012 still have time to sign up to receive the 2017 Census of Agriculture report form by visiting www.agcensus.usda.gov and clicking on the 'Make Sure You Are Counted' button through June. NASS defines a farm as any place from which $1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year (2017).

Dates to Remember

Sept. 1 ---- Dairy producers can enroll in the Milk Price Protection Program annual coverage.
Sept. 4 ---- Labor Day Holiday. FSA Offices Closed.
Oct. 1 ----- Deadline to obtain 2018 NAP coverage for Winter Wheat, Rye, Barley and Speltz.
Oct. 9 ----- Columbus Day Holiday. FSA Offices Closed.
Nov. 6 ---- County committee ballots mailed to voters.
Nov. 10 --- Veterans Day Holiday. FSA Offices Closed.
Nov. 15 --- The final acreage reporting deadline for perennial forage crops.
Nov. 20 --- Last day to apply for coverage for asparagus, blueberries, caneberries, cherries, chestnuts, forage for hay and pasture, grapes, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums, strawberries, honey, hops and maple syrup.
Nov. 23 --- Thanksgiving Day Holiday. FSA Offices Closed.
Dec. 4 ----- Last day to return voted Ballots in county committee election.
Dec. 15 --- Last day for dairy producers to make elections for Milk Price Protection Program.