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Farm Service Agency

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Alabama FSA Newsletter

Alabama Farm Service Agency

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To find contact information
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www.fsa.usda.gov/al

Enrollment Period for 2017 Safety Net Coverage Continues Through Aug. 1

Producers on farms with base acres under the safety net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill, known as the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, can visit their local FSA office to sign contracts and enroll for the 2017 crop year. The enrollment period will continue until Aug. 1, 2017.

Since shares and ownership of a farm can change year-to-year, producers on the farm must enroll by signing a contract each program year.

If a farm is not enrolled during the 2017 enrollment period, the producers on that farm will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs for the 2017 crop should crop prices or farm revenues fall below the historical price or revenue benchmarks established by the program. Producers who made their elections in 2015 must still enroll during the 2017 enrollment period.

The ARC and PLC programs were authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill and offer a safety net to agricultural producers when there is a substantial drop in prices or revenues for covered commodities. Covered commodities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium grain rice (which includes short grain and sweet rice), safflower seed, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat. Upland cotton is no longer a covered commodity. For more details regarding these programs, go to www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.

For more information, producers are encouraged to visit their local FSA office. To find a local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Acreage Reporting

Filing an accurate crop and acreage report at your local FSA office can prevent the loss of benefits for a variety of programs. Failed acreage is acreage that was timely planted with the intent to harvest, but because of disaster related conditions, the crop failed before it could be brought to harvest.

Prevented planting must be reported no later than 15 days after the final planting date. Annual acreage reports are required for most Farm Service Agency programs. Annual crop report deadlines vary based on region, crop, perennial vs. annual crop type, NAP or non-NAP crop and fall or winter seeding. Consult your local FSA office for deadlines in your area.

To be eligible for the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program or a Marketing Assistance Loan (MAL) or Loan Deficiency Payment (LDP), producers must submit an acreage report to account for all cropland on all farms.

CRP Participants Must Maintain Approved Cover on Acreages Enrolled in CRP and the Farm Programs

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) participants are responsible for ensuring adequate, approved vegetative and practice cover is maintained to control erosion throughout the life of the contract after the practice has been established. Participants must also control undesirable vegetation, weeds (including noxious weeds), insects and rodents that may pose a threat to existing cover or adversely impact other landowners in the area.

All CRP maintenance activities, such as mowing, burning, disking and spraying, must be conducted outside the primary nesting or brood rearing season for wildlife, which for Alabama is April 1 through July 15. However, spot treatment of the acreage may be allowed during the primary nesting or brood rearing season if, left untreated, the weeds, insects or undesirable species would adversely impact the approved cover. In this instance, spot treatment is limited to the affected areas in the field and requires County Committee approval prior to beginning the spot treatment. The County Committee will consult with NRCS to determine if such activities are needed to maintain the approved cover.

Annual mowing of CRP for generic weed control, or for cosmetic purposes, is prohibited at all times.

Authorization Required for Incidental Grazing of CRP Acres

In certain situations, landowners and operators may need to graze a field containing Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) continuous practices such as grass waterways (CP8A), contour grass strips (CP15A); filter strips (CP21); quail and upland bird habitat buffers (CP33), denitrifying bioreactor on filter strips (CP21B), or saturated filter strips (CP21S). FSA must first authorize the incidental grazing on CRP in a field intended to be gleaned.

Grazing is incidental to the gleaning of the crop residue in a field, or before the harvest of a small grain and occurs after the harvest of crops from within the surrounding field, or during the dormant period of a small grain intended for harvest.

The grazing cannot occur during the primary nesting season, which for Alabama is April 1 through July 15. In addition, grazing can only occur if the approved cover for that practice has been established and the grazing will not adversely impact the purpose or performance of the practice.

All livestock shall be removed from CRP acreage **no later than two months** after incidental grazing begins. CRP participants utilizing incidental grazing will have a payment reduction for the acreage being grazed. Participants are also responsible, at their own expense, to reestablish a cover destroyed or damaged as a result of the incidental grazing.

If the acreage to be grazed is separated from the surrounding cropland by a fence, the CRP acreage shall not be grazed.

Baled Hay and the Imported Fire Ant

If you buy, sell, or produce baled hay, check out USDA's new factsheet titled "Questions and Answers: Moving Baled Hay From Areas Under Quarantine for Imported Fire Ant." This publication contains useful information for farmers, ranchers, hay growers, and suppliers as they respond to recent wildfires in Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. Its goal is to help support commerce and the movement of hay, while guarding against the further spread of the imported fire ant. Click [here](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant-health/baled-hay) to open the factsheet. The Web address is <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant-health/baled-hay>.

Change in Farming Operation

If you have bought or sold land, or if you have picked up or dropped rented land from your operation, make sure you report the changes to the office as soon as possible. You need to provide a copy of your deed or recorded land contract for purchased property. Failure to maintain accurate records with FSA on all land you have an interest in can lead to possible program ineligibility and penalties. Making the record changes now will save you time in the spring. Update signature authorization when changes in the operation occur. Producers are reminded to contact the office if there is a change in operations on a farm so that records can be kept current and accurate.

USDA Announces Changes to Fruit, Vegetable and Wild Rice Planting Rules

Farm Service Agency (FSA) has announced fruit, vegetable and wild rice provisions that affect producers who intend to participate in certain programs authorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014.

Producers who intend to participate in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs are subject to an acre-for-acre payment reduction when fruits and nuts, vegetables or wild rice are planted on the payment acres of a farm. Payment reductions do not apply to mung beans, dry peas, lentils or chickpeas. Planting fruits, vegetables or wild rice on acres that are not considered payment acres will not result in a payment reduction. Farms that are eligible to participate in ARC/PLC but are not enrolled for a particular year may plant unlimited fruits, vegetables and wild rice for that year but will not receive ARC/PLC payments for that year. Eligibility for succeeding years is not affected.

Planting and harvesting fruits, vegetables and wild rice on ARC/PLC acreage is subject to the acre-for-acre payment reduction when those crops are planted on either more than 15 percent of the base acres

of a farm enrolled in ARC using the county coverage or PLC, or more than 35 percent of the base acres of a farm enrolled in ARC using the individual coverage.

Fruits, vegetables and wild rice that are planted in a double-cropping practice will not cause a payment reduction if the farm is in a double-cropping region as designated by the USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation.

Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation Certification Must be Filed to Receive FSA Benefits

The 2014 Farm Bill requires farmers to have a Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation Certification (AD-1026) on file with their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office in order to maintain eligibility for premium support on federal crop insurance.

Since enactment of the 1985 Farm Bill, eligibility for most commodity, disaster and conservation programs has been linked to compliance with the highly erodible land conservation and wetland conservation provisions. The 2014 Farm Bill continues the requirement that producers adhere to conservation compliance guidelines to be eligible for most programs administered by FSA and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). This includes financial assistance from the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), livestock disaster assistance programs, Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) and most programs implemented by FSA. It also includes the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Conservation Stewardship Program and other conservation programs implemented by NRCS.

If you have not submitted the AD-1026 form, please do so before the June 1, 2017 deadline.

When a farmer completes and submits the AD-1026 certification form, FSA and NRCS staff will review the associated farm records and outline any additional actions that may be required to meet the required conservation compliance provisions.

Form AD-1026 is available at USDA Service Centers and online at: www.fsa.usda.gov. Please contact your local USDA Service Center for more information.

Loan Servicing

There are options for Farm Service Agency loan customers during financial stress. If you are a borrower who is unable to make payments on a loan, contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager to learn about the options available to you.

USDA Microloans Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property

Producers, Including Beginning and Underserved Farmers, Have a New Option to Gain Access to Land

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is offering farm ownership microloans, creating a new

financing avenue for farmers to buy and improve property. These microloans are especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming, and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations.

The microloan program has been hugely successful, providing more than 16,800 low-interest loans, totaling over \$373 million to producers across the country. Microloans have helped farmers and ranchers with operating costs, such as feed, fertilizer, tools, fencing, equipment, and living expenses since 2013. Seventy percent of loans have gone to new farmers.

Now, microloans will be available to also help with farm land and building purchases, and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate loans to help farmers strengthen their operations. Microloans provide up to \$50,000 to qualified producers, and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

To learn more about the FSA microloan program visit www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans, or contact your local FSA office.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. 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).