

December 2020



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Alaska State FSA Newsletter

Alaska State Farm Service Agency

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Alaska FSA State Director News

Christmas is coming to you and your family in a few short weeks. Sadly, some of the usual events, like watching a live Theatre production "A Christmas Carol" is not available to us this year. I did find a radio program of "The Christmas Carol" that my family plans to listen to. I saw a Mom with two daughters, all dressed up to do the "Nutcracker ballet" but had to settle for lunch instead. Gift giving is still a major part of most families Christmas celebration. Everyone is always trying to get the perfect gift for someone you know and love.

When the Alaska Grown products you consume become scarce, the farmer has the incentive to expand and grow more. New and Beginning farmers see an opportunity to start a farming business to fill that scarcity. Supply is

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

Committee Meetings:

Northern Co TBA
Southern Co Jan 12, 10 am

increased when business expands. Agriculture then, continues to grow and enlarge, providing more products, more volume and more opportunity.

The issue of food security facing Alaskan's is talked about in circles large and small. Many Alaskans, especially those who live far away from a store have always kept a large supply of food in the pantry for storage. I have read about people who live in remote villages and they order their canned, dry goods and nonperishable groceries on an annual basis scheduled to come in when the barge does.

Could locally sourced food products be that perfect gift? Let me suggest giving Alaskan Grown products for your gift giving. Help solve food security by adding to a pantry or freezer. Start or continue the \$5 challenge by the Div. of Agriculture year-round. There are still many food choices for locally grown foods that make our communities more secure.

Could membership in a professional organization be that perfect gift? In Alaska, there are several professional organizations that look out for agriculture interests. Some are smaller in the local area to promote a specific cause. Others are larger, have a wide reach and cover many agricultural interests. If you have any interest in anything or everything Alaskan agriculture, you can be a part of these professional organizations. Gift your spouse a membership in one that interests him or her. Buy one for yourself. Do your friends and family with agriculture interests make your gift giving list? Give them a membership too. This could be that perfect Christmas gift.

You can find any of these professional organizations with a simple internet search. Check out the benefits of the organization's web page. Professional organizations are where you live and work. Be as involved as you want or don't want, the membership benefits are still available. The gift is in the benefit.

May each of you have a very Merry Christmas this year.

Dec. 11 Deadline Approaching for USDA Program for Farmers and Ranchers Impacted by COVID-19

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds farmers and ranchers to apply for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2 (CFAP 2) by Dec. 11, 2020. This program provides direct relief to producers facing market disruptions and associated costs because of COVID-19.

With over 300 eligible commodities, from livestock and row crops to specialty crops and aquaculture, most farmers and ranchers are potentially eligible for CFAP 2.

Producers have several options for applying for the CFAP 2 program by the Dec. 11 deadline. Producers can find eligible commodities, payment rates, calculations and options to apply on farmers.gov/cfap.

Customers seeking one-on-one support with the CFAP 2 application process can call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer general assistance. This is a recommended first step before a producer engages the team at the FSA county office. The call center can also provide service to non-English

speaking customers. Customers will select 1 for English and 2 to speak with a Spanish speaking employee. For other languages, customers select 1 and indicate their language to the call center staff.

Additionally, farmers.gov offers a number of resources for producers interested in applying for CFAP 2, including:

- [Eligible Commodities Finder](#)
- Videos, including “[How to Apply for CFAP 2](#)”
- Blogs, including “[Myth Debunked: Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2](#)”

A correction to the CFAP 2 rule is pending. In case a producer is affected by this correction, FSA will provide additional time to apply or edit their application.

CFAP 2 is a separate program from the first iteration of CFAP, now referred to as CFAP 1. Participating in CFAP 1 is not a prerequisite for participating in CFAP 2. Additionally, producers who applied for CFAP 1 will not be automatically enrolled in CFAP 2 and must complete a new application to be eligible for assistance.

Both CFAP 1 and CFAP 2 are self-certification programs, which means the applicant certifies the information submitted is correct. As part of the internal controls portion of CFAP 1, FSA is conducting spot checks of applications, asking producers to provide supporting documentation to verify the information on them. Producers are being selected using a statistically sound methodology. These CFAP 1 applicants will be contacted by FSA staff and asked to provide supporting documentation to verify the information certified by the producer on their CFAP 1 application.

USDA Supports U.S. Seafood Industry Impacted by Retaliatory Tariffs

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will provide approximately \$530 million to support the U.S. seafood industry and commercially licensed fishermen impacted by retaliatory tariffs from foreign governments. The funding will be provided through the Seafood Trade Relief Program and funded through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA).

The Seafood Trade Relief Program funding will support the following seafood types:

- Atka mackerel
- Crab (Dungeness, King, Snow, Southern Tanner)
- Flounder
- Geoduck
- Goosefish
- Herrings
- Lobster
- Pacific Cod
- Pacific Ocean Perch
- Pollock
- Sablefish
- Salmon
- Sole
- Squid
- Tuna

- Turbot

Fishermen can sign-up for relief through the program from September 14, 2020 to January 15, 2021. Fishermen should apply through their local USDA Service Center. To find your local Service Center, visit www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator. The application can be found at www.farmers.gov/seafood.

Call Center

A call center is available for fishermen who would like additional one-on-one support with the STRP application process. Please call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance. The call center can provide service to non-English speaking customers. Customers will select 1 for English and 2 to speak with a Spanish speaking employee. For other languages, customers select 1 and indicate their language to the call center staff.

Some USDA Service Centers in Alaska will begin allowing in-person office visits by appointment only. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business should call ahead to confirm the office's status and make an appointment before visiting. Visitors will be pre-screened based on health concerns or recent travel and must adhere to social distancing guidelines. Visitors will be required to wear a face covering during their appointment. Field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. Our program delivery staff will be in the office and work with our producers in person, by phone, by email, or by using other online tools. More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

FSA Offers Joint Financing Option on Direct Farm Ownership Loans

The USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) [Direct Farm Ownership loans](#) can help farmers and ranchers become owner-operators of family farms, improve and expand current operations, increase agricultural productivity, and assist with land tenure to save farmland for future generations.

There are three types of Direct Farm Ownership Loans: regular, down payment and joint financing. FSA also offers a [Direct Farm Ownership Microloan](#) option for smaller financial needs up to \$50,000.

Joint financing allows FSA to provide more farmers and ranchers with access to capital. FSA lends up to 50 percent of the total amount financed. A commercial lender, a State program or the seller of the property being purchased, provides the balance of loan funds, with or without an FSA guarantee. The maximum loan amount for a joint financing loan is \$600,000, and the repayment period for the loan is up to 40 years.

The operation must be an eligible farm enterprise. Farm Ownership loan funds cannot be used to finance nonfarm enterprises and all applicants must be able to meet general eligibility requirements. Loan applicants are also required to have participated in the business operations of a farm or ranch for at least three years out of the 10 years prior to the date the application is submitted. The applicant must show documentation that their participation in the business operation of the farm or ranch was not solely as a laborer.

For more information about farm loans, contact the Northern County USDA Service Center at 907- 895-4242, the Southern County USDA Service Center at 907-761-7754 or visit fsa.usda.gov.

USDA Offers Targeted Farm Loan Funding for Underserved Groups and Beginning Farmers

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds producers that FSA offers targeted farm ownership and farm operating loans to assist underserved applicants and beginning farmers and ranchers.

USDA defines underserved applicants as a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of the group without regard to their individual qualities. For farm loan program purposes, targeted underserved groups are women, African Americans, American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Hispanics and Asians and Pacific Islanders.

Underserved or beginning farmers and ranchers who cannot obtain commercial credit from a bank can apply for either FSA direct loans or guaranteed loans. Direct loans are made to applicants by FSA. Guaranteed loans are made by lending institutions who arrange for FSA to guarantee the loan. FSA can guarantee up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan. The FSA guarantee allows lenders to make agricultural credit available to producers who do not meet the lender's normal underwriting criteria.

The direct and guaranteed loan program provides for two types of loans: farm ownership loans and farm operating loans. In addition to customary farm operating and ownership loans, FSA offers Microloans through the direct loan program. Microloans focus on the financing needs of small, beginning farmer, niche, and non-traditional farm operations. Microloans are available for both ownership and operating finance needs. To learn more about microloans, visit fsa.usda.gov/microloans.

To qualify as a beginning producer, the individual or entity must meet the eligibility requirements outlined for direct or guaranteed loans. Individuals and all entity members must have operated a farm for less than 10 years. Applicants must materially or substantially participate in the operation.

For more information on FSA's farm loan programs and targeted underserved and beginning farmer guidelines, contact the Northern County USDA Service Center at 907- 895-4242, the Southern County USDA Service Center at 907-761-7754 or visit fsa.usda.gov/farmloans.

USDA Service Centers Resuming Office Visits in Some Locations While Taking Precautionary Measures to Help Prevent the Spread of Coronavirus

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Online services are still available to customers, including our [new Box and OneSpan functionality](#) that enable customers to sign and share FSA and NRCS documents with USDA Service Center staff in just a few clicks. Producers can get started with a simple username and password for Box or, for OneSpan, a quick identity verification. Additional services are available to customers with an eAuth account, which provides access to the farmers.gov portal where producers can view USDA farm loan information and payments and view and track certain USDA program applications and payments. . Through the [FSA website](#), customers can access

certain FSA programs and view FSA data, including maps, on [FSAfarm+](#). Customers who do not already have an eAuth account can enroll at [farmers.gov/sign-in](#).

For the most current updates on available services and flexibilities due to COVID-19, or to find contact information for your local Service Center [farmers.gov/coronavirus](#).

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in these meetings and/or events should contact Lloyd Wilhelm, Northern CED, at (907) 895-4242, Erin Sturdivant, Southern CED, at (907) 761-7754 or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339.

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).

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