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Arizona FSA Newsletter

Arizona Farm Service Agency

230 N 1st Ave,
Phoenix, AZ 85003

Phone: 602-285-6300
Fax: 602-285-6325

State Executive
Director:
Gloria Montañó

Farm Loan Manager:
Sharon Kinnison

Program Specialist:
Ryan Hunt, Carla Hill
and Dianna Kazee

Please contact your
local FSA Office for
questions specific to

USDA Creates More Bird Habitat Opportunities on Irrigated Farmland

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) announces more bird habitats to be established in irrigated farmland regions through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

Declines in upland bird populations, such as the northern bobwhite, pheasant, and prairie chicken, led to the creation of new Conservation Reserve Program features to help restore habitats for these species in these agricultural areas. Since the program's creation in 2004, more than 240,000 acres of marginal cropland has been converted to native grasslands, spurring an increase in upland bird populations.

In recent years, however, applications for this type of habitat creation have slowed. To encourage more participation, USDA's new policy focuses on farmland with center-pivot irrigation systems where there are circular areas of cropland with patches of land beyond

your operation or county.

the reach of irrigation. Until now, these patches – known as pivot corners – were only eligible for habitat creation when connected by a linear strip of grassland also enrolled in the program. The new policy allows producers interested in habitat creation to use disconnected pivot corners to help increase the population of upland birds.

Other species that can benefit from today's change include the mourning dove, wild turkey, several sparrows, meadowlark and bobolinks.

The Conservation Reserve Program is a voluntary program. FSA contracts with agricultural landowners so that environmentally sensitive land is not farmed but instead used for conservation. Participants establish long-term plant species that control soil erosion, sequester carbon, improve water quality, and strengthen declining wildlife populations. In return, participants receive annual rental payments between 10 and 15 years.

Interested landowners can enroll pivot corners in the Conservation Reserve Program at any time. Participants and land must meet certain eligibility requirements. Other restrictions may apply. For additional details, contact your local Farm Service Agency office at offices.usda.gov or visit the website at www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation

Important ARC/PLC Program Deadlines Approaching

Producers are reminded that the deadline to update yield history and/or reallocate base acres is Feb. 27, 2015. Farm owners and producers can choose between the new 2014 Farm Bill established programs, Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) through March 31, 2015. The new programs, designed to help producers better manage risk, usher in one of the most significant reforms to U.S. farm programs in decades.

USDA helped create online tools to assist in the decision process, allowing farm owners and producers to enter information about their operation and see projections that show what ARC and/or PLC will mean for them under possible future scenarios. Farm owners and producers can access the online resources, available at www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc, from the convenience of their home computer or mobile device at any time.

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 rice), safflower seed, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat. Upland cotton is no longer a covered commodity.

Dates associated with ARC and PLC that farm owners and producers need to know:

- Now through Feb. 27, 2015: Farm owners may visit their local Farm Service Agency office to update yield history and/or reallocate base acres.
- Now through March 31, 2015: Producers make a one-time election between ARC and PLC for the 2014 through 2018 crop years.
- Mid-April 2015 through summer 2015: Producers sign contracts for 2014 and 2015 crop years.
- October 2015: Payments issued for 2014 crop year, if needed.

To learn more about which safety net options are most appropriate for specific farming operations, farmers can use new Web tools at www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc, which can be accessed from the convenience of a home computer or a mobile device at any time. To learn more about upcoming educational meetings, farmers can contact their local Farm Service Agency county office at <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>.

USDA Reminds Farmers of 2014 Farm Bill Conservation Compliance Changes

The 2014 Farm Bill implements a change that requires farmers to have a Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation Certification (AD-1026) on file.

For farmers to be eligible for premium support on their federal crop insurance, a completed and signed AD-1026 certification form must be on file with the FSA. The Risk Management Agency (RMA), through the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC), manages the federal crop insurance program that provides the modern farm safety net for American farmers and ranchers.

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

NRCS. This includes most financial assistance such as the new price and revenue protection programs, the Conservation Reserve Program, the Livestock Disaster Assistance programs and Marketing Assistance Loans and most programs implemented by FSA. It also includes the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the Conservation Stewardship Program, and other conservation programs implemented by NRCS.

Many FSA and Natural Resource Conservation (NRCS) programs already have implemented this requirement and therefore most producers should already have an AD-1026 form on file for their associated lands. If an AD-1026 form has not been filed or is incomplete, then farmers are reminded of the deadline of June 1, 2015.

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 compliance with the conservation compliance provisions.

FSA recently released a revised form AD-1026, which is available at USDA Service Centers and online at: www.fsa.usda.gov. USDA will publish a rule later this year that will provide details outlining the connection of conservation compliance with crop insurance premium support. Producers can also contact their local USDA Service Center for information. A listing of service center locations is available at offices.usda.gov.

LIVESTOCK INDEMNITY PROGRAM (LIP)

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to eligible producers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law. LIP compensates livestock owners and contract growers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather, including losses due to hurricanes, floods, blizzards, wildfires, extreme heat or extreme cold.

For 2015, eligible losses must occur on or after Jan. 1, 2015, and before December 31, 2015. A notice of loss must be filed with FSA within 30 days of when the loss of livestock is apparent. Participants must provide the following supporting documentation to their local FSA office no later than 30 calendar days after the end of the calendar year for which benefits are requested:

- Proof of death documentation
- Copy of growers contracts
- Proof of normal mortality documentation

USDA has established normal mortality rates for each type and weight range of eligible livestock, i.e. Adult Beef Cow = 1.5% and Non-Adult Beef Cattle (less than 400 pounds) = 3%. These established percentages reflect losses that are considered expected or typical under "normal" conditions. Producers who suffer livestock losses in 2015 must file both of the following:

- A notice of loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss was apparent or by January 30, 2016
- An application for payment by January 30, 2016.

Additional Information about LIP is available at your local FSA office or online at: www.fsa.usda.gov.

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Microloan Cap Grows to \$50,000

Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds farmers and ranchers that the FSA borrowing limit for microloans increased from \$35,000 to \$50,000, effective Nov. 7. Microloans offer borrowers simplified lending with less paperwork.

The microloan change allows beginning, small and mid-sized farmers to access an additional \$15,000 in loans using a simplified application process with up to seven years to repay. Microloans are part of USDA’s continued commitment to [small and midsized farming operations](#).

To complement the microloan program additional changes to FSA eligibility requirements will enhance beginning farmers and ranchers access to land, a key barrier to entry level producers. FSA policies related to farm experience have changed so that other types of skills may be considered to meet the direct farming experience required for farm ownership loan eligibility. Operation or management of non-farm businesses, leadership positions while serving in the military or advanced education in an agricultural field will now count towards the experience applicants need to show when applying for farm ownership loans. **Important Note:** Microloans cannot be used to purchase real estate.

Since 2010, FSA has made a record amount of farm loans — more than 165,000 loans totaling nearly \$23 billion. More than 50 percent of USDA’s farm loans now go to beginning farmers. In addition, FSA has increased its lending to socially-disadvantaged producers by nearly 50 percent since 2010.

Please review the FSA [Microloan Program Fact Sheet](#) for program application, eligibility and related

information.

Youth Loans

The Farm Service Agency makes loans to youth to establish and operate agricultural income-producing projects in connection with 4-H clubs, FFA and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is \$5000

Youth Loan Eligibility Requirements:

- Be a citizen of the United States (which includes Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) or a legal resident alien
- Be 10 years to 20 years of age
- Comply with FSA's general eligibility requirements
- Be unable to get a loan from other sources
- Conduct a modest income-producing project in a supervised program of work as outlined above
- Demonstrate capability of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. The project supervisor must recommend the youth loan applicant, along with providing adequate supervision.

Stop by the county office for help preparing and processing the application forms.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. 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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