

September 2020



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

# NEWSLETTER

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- [FSA Encourages Farmers and Ranchers to Vote in County Committee Elections](#)
- [USDA Offers Annual Installment Deferral Option for Farm Storage Facility Loan Borrowers](#)
- [Disaster Assistance for 2020 Livestock Forage Losses](#)
- [USDA Packages Disaster Protection with Loans to Benefit Specialty Crop and Diversified Producers](#)
- [Disaster Set-Aside \(DSA\) Program for Farm Loan Borrowers](#)
- [Conservation at Work Video Series](#)

## Arizona FSA Newsletter

### Arizona Farm Service Agency

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### FSA Encourages Farmers and Ranchers to Vote in County Committee Elections

The 2020 Farm Service Agency County Committee Elections voting will begin on Nov. 4, when ballots are mailed to eligible voters. The deadline to return the ballots to local FSA offices, or to be postmarked, is Dec. 2, 2020.

County committee members are an important component of the operations of FSA and provide a link between the agricultural community and USDA. Farmers and ranchers elected to county committees help deliver FSA programs at the local level, applying their knowledge and judgment to make decisions on commodity price support programs; conservation programs; incentive indemnity and disaster programs for some commodities; emergency programs and eligibility. FSA committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws.

To be an eligible voter, farmers and ranchers must participate or cooperate in an FSA program. A person who is not of legal voting

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[www.fsa.usda.gov/az](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/az)

age but supervises and conducts the farming operations of an entire farm, may also be eligible to vote.

Eligible voters who do not receive a ballot can obtain one from their local USDA Service Center.

Newly elected committee members will take office Jan. 1, 2021.

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## **USDA Offers Annual Installment Deferral Option for Farm Storage Facility Loan Borrowers**

To assist Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) borrowers experiencing financial hardship from the pandemic and other challenges in production agriculture, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is offering a one-time annual installment payment deferral option. No fees or prepayment penalties apply for borrowers who choose this FSFL loan flexibility option.

Eligible borrowers can request a one-time only annual installment payment deferral for loans having terms of three, five, seven or ten years. The installment deferral option is not available for 12-year term loans.

The FSFL installment payments will remain the same, except for the last year. The original loan interest rate and annual payment due date will remain the same. However, because the installment payment deferral is a one-year loan term extension, the final payment will be higher due to additional accrued interest.

Borrowers interested in exercising the one-time annual installment deferral option should contact FSA to make the request and to obtain, complete and sign required forms.

FSFLs provide low-interest financing for producers to store, handle and transport eligible commodities.

### **More Information**

In addition to offering flexibilities for FSFLs, FSA has also made other flexibilities to help producers impacted by the pandemic, including relaxing the loan-making process for farm operating and ownership loans and implementing the Disaster Set-Aside provision that enables an upcoming installment on a direct loan to be set aside for the year. More information on these flexibilities can be found at [farmers.gov/coronavirus](http://farmers.gov/coronavirus).

All USDA Service Centers are open for business, including some that are open to visitors to conduct business in person by appointment only. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct

business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other Service Center agency should call ahead and schedule an appointment. Service Centers that are open for appointments will pre-screen visitors based on health concerns or recent travel, and visitors must adhere to social distancing guidelines. Visitors may also 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 they will be working with our producers in office, by phone and using online tools. More information can be found at [farmers.gov/coronavirus](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus).

For more information, contact your local USDA Service Center. To locate your local FSA office, visit [farmers.gov/service-center-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-center-locator).

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## Disaster Assistance for 2020 Livestock Forage Losses

Producers in Arizona are eligible to apply for 2020 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) benefits.

LFP provides compensation if you suffer grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land or fire on federally managed land.

County committees can only accept LFP applications after notification is received by the National Office of qualifying drought or if a federal agency prohibits producers from grazing normal permitted livestock on federally managed lands due to qualifying fire. Eligible livestock producers must submit a completed CCC-853 and required supporting documentation within 30 calendar days after the end of the calendar year in which the grazing loss occurred

For additional information about LFP, including eligible livestock and fire criteria, contact your local county USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

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## 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 noninsurable 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 local county USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov/nap](https://fsa.usda.gov/nap) or [fsa.usda.gov/farmloans](https://fsa.usda.gov/farmloans).

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## Disaster Set-Aside (DSA) Program for Farm Loan Borrowers

Farm Service Agency (FSA) borrowers with farms located in designated primary or contiguous disaster areas who are unable to make their scheduled FSA loan payments should consider the Disaster Set-Aside (DSA) program.

DSA is available to producers who suffered losses as a result of a natural disaster and relieves immediate and temporary financial stress. FSA is authorized to consider setting aside the portion of a payment/s needed for the operation to continue on a viable scale.

Borrowers must have at least two years left on the term of their loan in order to qualify.

Borrowers have eight months from the date of the disaster designation to submit a complete application. The application must include a written request for DSA signed by all parties liable for the debt along with production records and financial history for the operating year in which the disaster occurred. FSA may request additional information from the borrower in order to determine eligibility.

All farm loans must be current or less than 90 days past due at the time the DSA application is complete. Borrowers may not set aside more than one installment on each loan.

The amount set-aside, including interest accrued on the principal portion of the set-aside, is due on or before the final due date of the loan.

For more information, contact your local county USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

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## Conservation at Work Video Series

The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service unveiled the *Conservation at Work* video series in early 2020. The series consists of short videos that highlight common conservation practices being implemented around the country.

The videos shine the spotlight on farmers, ranchers and forestland owners from across the U.S. who tell us their conservation stories, and how practices are helping them protect and improve resources and save time and money.

The *Conservation at Work* video series can be found on [YouTube](#) and [farmers.gov/conserve/ConservationAtWork](https://farmers.gov/conserve/ConservationAtWork).

## **USDA Updates Conservation Provisions for Highly Erodible Land and Wetlands**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) published its final rule on determining whether land is considered highly erodible or a wetland, integrating input from the public and making updates in accordance with the 2018 Farm Bill. This final rule follows a focused effort by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to improve consistency and use of science in making determinations.

"Feedback is a very important resource, and we appreciate all of those who help us improve how determinations are made," said NRCS Acting Chief Kevin Norton. "Highly erodible land and wetland determinations are the gateway to USDA programs, and we strive to provide the highest quality technical assistance to inform decision-making by farmers and ranchers."

To be eligible for most USDA programs, producers must be conservation compliant with the highly erodible land and wetland provisions. These provisions aim to reduce soil loss on erosion-prone lands and to protect wetlands for the multiple benefits they provide.

The final rule was made available for public inspection today, and it will be published tomorrow in the Federal Register. This follows an interim final rule published Dec. 7, 2018.

This final rule confirms most of the changes made by the December 2018 interim final rule and makes these additional updates:

1. Adding the requirement of the 2018 Farm Bill that USDA will make a reasonable effort to include the affected person in an on-site investigation conducted prior to making a wetland violation technical determination.
2. Further clarifying how wetland hydrology is identified for farmed wetlands and farmed wetland pasture.
3. Adding clarification to the consideration of best-drained condition for wetland hydrology in keeping with the definition of prior converted cropland.
4. Relocating the provision that wetland determinations can be done on a tract, field, or sub-field basis in order to improve clarity.

NRCS has recently updated its conservation compliance webpages, adding highly erodible land and wetland determination resources for agricultural producers by state.

Learn more about [conservation compliance](#) on the NRCS website.

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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).