

July 2015



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Connecticut FSA Newsletter

Connecticut Farm Service Agency

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www.fsa.usda.gov/ct

State Committee:

Vincent Malerba, Chair
Gary Crump, Member
Theresa Freund, Member
Stephen Jarmoc, Member
Edward Kasheta Jr.,
Member

State Executive Director:

Bryan Hurlburt

Division Chiefs:

Devon Marsden
Program Specialist

Randy Kleiner

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Farm Loan Chief

Local Offices Issue Receipts for Services Provided

Doris Ostrowski
Administrative Officer

Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds agricultural producers that FSA provides a receipt to customers who request or receive assistance or information on FSA programs.

Please contact your local FSA Office for questions specific to your operation or county. .

As part of FSA's mission to provide enhanced customer service, producers who visit FSA will receive documentation of services requested and provided. From December through June, FSA issued more than 327,000 electronic receipts.

The 2014 Farm Bill requires a receipt to be issued for any agricultural program assistance requested from FSA, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Rural Development (RD). Receipts include the date, summary of the visit and any agricultural information, program and/or loan assistance provided to an individual or entity.

In some cases, a form or document – such as a completed and signed program enrollment form – serve as the customer receipt instead of a printed or electronic receipt. A service is any information, program or loan assistance provided whether through a visit, email, fax or letter.

To learn more about FSA, visit www.fsa.usda.gov or to find your local USDA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Enrollment for 2016 Dairy Margin Protection Program Started July 1

FSA today announced that as of July 1, 2015, dairy farmers can enroll in [Margin Protection Program for coverage in 2016](#). The voluntary program, established by the 2014 Farm Bill, provides financial assistance to participating dairy operations when the margin – the difference between the price of milk and feed costs – falls below the coverage level selected by the farmer.

The Margin Protection Program gives participating dairy producers the flexibility to select coverage levels best suited for their operation. Enrollment begins July 1 and ends on Sept. 30, 2015, for coverage in 2016. Participating farmers will remain in the program through 2018 and pay a \$100 administrative fee each year. Producers also have the option of selecting a different coverage level during open enrollment each year. Margin Protection Program payments are based on an operation's historical production. An operation's historical production will increase by 2.61 percent

in 2016 if the operation participated in 2015, providing a stronger safety net.

USDA also has an online resource available to help dairy producers decide which level of coverage will provide them with the strongest safety net under a variety of conditions. The enhanced Web tool, available at www.fsa.usda.gov/mpptool, allows dairy farmers to quickly and easily combine their 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, mobile phone, or tablet, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Dairy operations enrolling in the program must meet conservation compliance provisions. Producers participating in the Livestock Gross Margin insurance program may register for the Margin Protection Program, but this new margin program will only begin once their livestock dairy insurance coverage has ended. Producers must also submit form CCC-782 for 2016, confirming their Margin Protection Program coverage level selection, to the local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office. If electing higher coverage for 2016, dairy producers can either pay the premium in full at the time of enrollment or pay a minimum of 25 percent of the premium by Feb. 1, 2016.

For more information, visit FSA online at www.fsa.usda.gov/dairy for more information, or stop by a local FSA office to learn more about the Margin Protection Program. To find a local FSA office in your area, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

USDA Opens Enrollment Period for Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Safety-Net Programs

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that eligible producers may now formally enroll in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for 2014 and 2015. The enrollment period began June 17, 2015, and will end Sept. 30, 2015.

The new programs, established by the 2014 Farm Bill, trigger financial protections for agricultural producers when market forces cause substantial drops in crop prices or revenues. More than 1.76 million farmers have elected ARC or PLC. Previously, 1.7 million producers had enrolled to receive direct payments (the program replaced with ARC and PLC by the 2014 Farm Bill). This means more farms have elected ARC or PLC than previously enrolled under previously administered programs.

Nationwide, 96 percent of soybean farms, 91 percent of corn farms, and 66 percent of wheat farms elected ARC. 99 percent of long grain rice farms, 99 percent of peanut farms, and 94 percent of medium grain rice farms elected PLC. For data about other crops and state-by-state program

election results go to www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.

Covered commodities under ARC and PLC 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 information please contact your local FSA office <https://offices.usda.gov>.

FSA County Committee Nomination Period in Connecticut Now Open

The nomination period for the FSA county committees in Connecticut began on June 15, 2015. Nomination forms must be postmarked or received in the County FSA Office by close of business on Aug. 3, 2015.

County Committees are unique to FSA and allow producers to have a voice on federal farm program implementation at the local level.

To be eligible to serve on the FSA county committee, a person must participate or cooperate in an agency administered program, be eligible to vote in a county committee election and reside in the Local Administrative Area (LAA) where they are nominated. All producers, including women, minority and beginning farmers and ranchers are encouraged to participate in the nomination and election process.

This year, nominations and elections will be held in the following counties' LAAs:

- **Hartford/Tolland-LAA 2**, which includes Canton, Simsbury, Bloomfield, Burlington, Avon, Farmington, Bristol, Plainville, Southington, New Britain, Newington, Hartford, East Hartford, Manchester, Wethersfield, Rocky Hill, West Hartford, and Berlin.
- **Hartford/Tolland-LAA 3**, which includes Windsor, East Windsor, and South Windsor.
- **Litchfield/Fairfield-LAA 2**, which includes Bethlehem, Bridgewater, Morris, New Milford, Plymouth, Roxbury, Thomaston, Washington, Watertown, and Woodbury
- **Litchfield/Fairfield-LAA 4**, which includes Bethel, Brookfield, Danbury, Darien, Easton, Greenwich, New Canaan, New Fairfield, Norwalk, Redding, Ridgefield, Sherman, Stamford, Weston, and Wilton.
- **New Haven/Middlesex-LAA1** which includes Southbury, Middlebury, Waterbury, Wolcott, Oxford, Derby, Naugatuck, Prospect, Cheshire, Beacon Falls, Seymour, Bethany, Ansonia, Orange, and Milford.
- **New London-LAA 3**, which includes Griswold, Lisbon, Norwich, North Stonington, Preston, Sprague, and Voluntown.
- **Windham-LAA 2**, which includes Woodstock, Thompson, and Pomfret.

Producers may nominate themselves or others as candidates. Organizations representing minority and women farmers and ranchers may also nominate candidates. To become a nominee, eligible individuals must sign form FSA-669A. The form and more information about county committee elections is available online at: www.fsa.usda.gov/elections.

Elected county committee members serve a three-year term and are responsible for making decisions on FSA disaster, conservation, commodity and price support programs, as well as other important federal farm program issues. County committees consist of three to 11 members.

FSA will mail election ballots to eligible voters beginning Nov. 9. Ballots are due back in the local County Office by mail or in person no later than Dec. 7, 2015. All newly elected county committee members and alternates will take office January 1, 2016.

For more information about county committees, please contact your local County FSA office at:

Hartford/Tolland Office – 860.688.7725
Litchfield/Fairfield Office – 860.626.8852
New Haven/Middlesex Office – 203.269.6665
New London Office – 860.887.9941
Windham Office – 860.779.0557

or visit www.fsa.usda.gov/elections.

2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 Average Adjusted Gross Income Compliance Reviews

The AGI verification and compliance reviews for 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 are conducted on producers who the IRS indicated may have exceeded the adjusted gross income limitations described in [7 CFR 1400.500]. Based on this review, producers will receive determinations of eligibility or ineligibility.

If the producer is determined to have exceeded the average AGI limitation of \$900,000, receivables will be established for payments earned directly or indirectly by the producer subject to the \$900,000 limitation. The Connecticut FSA Office has begun notifying producers selected for review. If you have any questions about the review process or determinations, please contact the Connecticut FSA Office at 860-871-4090. Producers who receive initial debt notification letters may only appeal the amount of the debt to their local FSA office. Payment eligibility adverse determinations become administratively final 30 days from the date of the payment eligibility adverse determination letter and can only be reopened if exceptional circumstances exist that prevented the producer from timely filing the appeal.

USDA Packages Disaster Protection with Loans to Benefit Specialty Crop and Diversified Producers

Free basic coverage and discounted premiums available for new and underserved loan applicants

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) today announced that producers who apply for FSA farm loans also will be offered the opportunity to enroll in new disaster loss protections created by the 2014 Farm Bill. The new coverage, available from the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), is available to FSA loan applicants who grow non-insurable crops, so this is especially important to fruit and vegetable producers 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, or higher coverage for a discounted premium.

The basic disaster coverage protects at 55 percent of the market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of production. Covered crops include “specialty” crops, for instance, 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.

In addition to free basic coverage, beginning, underserved or limited income producers are eligible for a 50 percent discount on premiums for the higher levels of coverage that protect up to 65 percent of expected production at 100 percent of the average market price. Producers also may work with FSA to 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 are 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.

Growers need not apply for an FSA loan, nor be a beginning, limited resource, or underserved farmer, to be eligible for Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program assistance. To learn more, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/nap or www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans, or contact your local FSA office at <https://offices.usda.gov>.

Agricultural Producers in Connecticut Still Have Time to Apply for Direct Farm Ownership Loan Program

Low-Interest Loans Can Help Producers Start or Expand Farms

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Connecticut Farm Service Agency (FSA) today announced that farmers and ranchers still have time to apply for low interest loans available through the FSA direct farm ownership program. Applications must be approved by Sept. 30, 2015, to take advantage of the funding available.

Eligible farmers and ranchers can borrow up to \$300,000 to buy farmland, construct or repair buildings, pay closing costs, or promote soil and water conservation. The interest rate can be as low as 1.5 percent with up to 40 years to repay.

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

For more information about farm loan, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans, or contact your local FSA office. To find your local FSA county office, visit <https://offices.usda.gov>.

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).