



# NEWSLETTER



February 2015

## Idaho Farm Service Agency

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

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## 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 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](http://offices.usda.gov) or visit the website at [www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation](http://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](http://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.

## ARC/PLC PROGRAM DEADLINES (CONTINUED)

Dates associated with ARC and PLC:

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](http://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 and be following their conservation plan/system.

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. If the AD-1026 is already on file and highly erodible land or wetlands

were determined, producers are encouraged to contact their local NRCS to ensure they are following their conservation plan/system.

FSA recently released a revised form AD-1026, which is available at USDA Service Centers and online at: [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://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.

## USDA ANNOUNCES NEW SUPPORT FOR BEGINNING FARMERS AND RANCHERS

USDA has announced the implementation of new Farm Bill measures and other policy changes to improve the financial security of new and beginning farmers and ranchers. USDA also unveiled [www.USDA.gov/newfarmers](http://www.USDA.gov/newfarmers), a new website that will provide a centralized, one-stop resource where beginning farmers and ranchers can explore the variety of USDA initiatives designed to help them succeed.

USDA's [www.usda.gov/newfarmers](http://www.usda.gov/newfarmers) has in depth information for new farmers and ranchers, including: how to increase access to land and capital; build new market opportunities; participate in conservation opportunities; select and use the right risk management tools; and access USDA education, and technical support programs. These issues have been identified as top priorities by new farmers. The website will also feature instructive case studies about beginning farmers who have successfully utilized USDA resources to start or expand their business operations.

The policy announcement in support of beginning farmers and ranchers includes:

[Waiving service fees for new and beginning farmers or ranchers to enroll in the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program \(NAP\) for the 2014 crop year.](#) NAP provides risk management tools to farmers who grow crops for which there is no crop insurance product. Under this waiver, announced via an official notice to Farm Service Agency offices, farmers and ranchers whom already enrolled in NAP for the 2014 crop year and certified to being a beginning farmer or social disadvantaged farmer are eligible for a service fee refund.

[Eliminating payment reductions under the Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\) for new and beginning farmers which will allow routine, prescribed, and emergency grazing outside the primary nesting season on enrolled land consistent with approved conservation plans.](#) Previously, farmers and ranchers grazing on CRP land were subject to a reduction in CRP payments of up to 25 percent. Waiving these reductions for new and beginning farmers will provide extra financial support during times of emergency like drought and other natural disasters.

[Increasing payment rates to beginning farmers and ranchers under Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program \(ELAP\).](#) Under this provision, beginning farmers can claim up 90 percent of losses for lost livestock, such as bees, under ELAP. This is a fifty percent increase over previously available payment amounts to new and beginning farmers.

USDA is also planning to announce additional crop insurance program changes for beginning farmers and ranchers – including discounted premiums, waiver of administrative fees, and other benefits.

## 2015 ACREAGE REPORTING DATES

In order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements and maintain a record of your cropping history, all producers are encouraged to visit the local County FSA office to file an accurate crop certification report by the applicable deadline.

Please note the next 2015 acreage reporting date:

July 15, 2015: Spring Alfalfa Seed and all other crops

The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.
- If a perennial forage crop is reported with the intended use of "cover only," "green manure," "left standing," or "seed," then the acreage must be reported by July 15th.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP covered crops is the earlier of the dates listed above or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

For questions regarding crop certification and crop loss reports, please contact your local County FSA office.

## LIVESTOCK FORAGE DISASTER PROGRAM (LFP)

Producers in most Idaho counties are eligible to apply for 2015 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) benefits on small grain, native pasture, improved pasture (non-irrigated), annual ryegrass, forage sorghum.

LFP provides compensation to eligible livestock producers who 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.

For 2015 and subsequent years, eligible livestock producers must complete a CCC-853 and the required supporting documentation no later than 30 calendar days after the end of the calendar year in which the grazing losses occurred. Losses must occur in the calendar year the application is being filed.

Additional Information about LFP, including eligible livestock and fire criteria, is available at your local FSA office or online at: [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

## FILING FOR NAP LOSSES

The CCC-576, Notice of Loss, is used to report failed acreage and prevented planting and may be completed by any producer with an interest in the crop. Timely filing a Notice of Loss is required for all crops including grasses. For losses on crops covered by the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) and crop

insurance, you must file a CCC-576, Notice of Loss, in the FSA County Office within 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent.

If filing for prevented planting, an acreage report and CCC-576 must be filed within 15 calendar days of the final planting date for the crop.

## 2014 MAL AND LDP REQUESTS

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) is accepting requests for marketing assistance loans (MALs) and loan deficiency payments (LDPs) for eligible 2014 commodities.

MALs and LDPs for the 2014 crop year become available to eligible producers beginning with harvest/shearing season and extending through a specific commodity's final loan availability date. Sugar commodity loans for the 2014 crop became available to sugar processors on Oct. 1, 2014.

MALs and LDPs provide financing and marketing assistance for wheat, feed grains, soybeans, and other oilseeds, pulse crops, wool and honey. MALs provide producers interim financing after harvest to help them meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows. A producer who is eligible to obtain a loan, but agrees to forgo the loan, may obtain an LDP if such a payment is available.

To be considered eligible for an LDP, producers must have form CCC-633EZ, Page 1 on file at their local FSA Office before losing beneficial interest in the crop. Pages 2, 3 or 4 of the form must be submitted when payment is requested.

Please contact your local FSA office for additional eligibility requirements.

The 2014 Farm Bill also establishes payment limitations per individual or entity not to exceed \$125,000 annually on certain commodities for the following program benefits: price loss coverage payments, agriculture risk coverage payments, marketing loan gains (MLGs) and LDPs. These payment limitations do not apply to MAL loan disbursements.

Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) provisions were modified by the 2014 Farm Bill, which states that a producer whose total applicable three-year average AGI exceeds \$900,000 is not eligible to receive an MLG or LDP.

National and county loans rates for 2014 crops are posted on the FSA website at: [www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport).

For more information, please visit a nearby USDA Service Center or FSA's website [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

## FINAL AVAILABILITY DATES FOR MARKETING ASSISTANCE LOANS & LOAN DEFICIENCY PAYMENTS

- January 31, 2015 - Mohair, Peanuts, Unshorn Pelts (LDP only), Wool
- March 31, 2015 - Barley, Canola, Crambe, Flaxseed, Honey, Oats, Rapeseed, Wheat, Sesame Seed
- May 31, 2015 - Corn, Dry Peas, Grain Sorghum, Lentils, Mustard Seed, Rice, Safflower Seed, Chickpeas, Soybeans, Sunflower Seed

## ADJUSTED GROSS INCOME AND PAYMENT LIMITATIONS

Producers who enroll in ARC/PLC programs must also file a farm operating plan with FSA. Producers who have already been determined “actively engaged in farming” may only have to file an annual update for any changes to their farm operation. Producers should review and update any farm changes or any producer member changes to their farm operating plans.

There is an annual payment limitation of \$125,000 per person or legal entity, which includes all payments and benefits from ARC, PLC, LDPs and MLGs.

Average Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) of \$900,000 per person, legal entity, and all interest holders of a legal entity, effective for 2014 and subsequent crop years, program years, and FYs for commodity, price support and disaster assistance and most conservation programs effective for FY 2015.

The \$900,000 average AGI is also applicable to prior year (October 1, 2011 and subsequent years) ELAP, LFP, LIP and TAP payments due to the approval of those disaster programs under the Agricultural Act of 2014.

## NAP COVERAGE AVAILABLE FOR 2015 CROPS FOR LIVESTOCK FEED INTENDED FOR GRAZING:

It is important that producers note that NAP coverage WILL be available for annually planted crops for livestock feed intended for grazing because RMA is not offering CAT level coverage under the Rainfall Index-Annual Forage Insurance Plan. The NAP sales closing date for this insurance is December 1st or March 15th (depending on the crop) for crops planted in the spring.

Please contact your local FSA office for questions concerning NAP or your crop insurance agent for questions concerning RMA crop insurance. A list of agents can be found at [www.rma.usda.gov/](http://www.rma.usda.gov/).

## USDA FARM SERVICE AGENCY MICROLOANS

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.

### Selected Interest Rates for February 2015

Farm Operating Loans — Direct	2.625%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct	3.75%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.50%
Emergency Loans	3.625%
Farm Storage Facility Loans (7 years)	1.875%
Sugar Storage Facility Loans (10 Years)	2.00%
Sugar Storage Facility Loans (12 Years)	2.125%

### Dates to Remember

Feb 16	FSA Offices closed for President’s Day
Feb 27	Deadline to certify to reallocation of yield updates
Mar 31	Last day to make ARC/PLC election
June 1	RMA deadline to file AD1026 (HEL Certification)
July 15	Crop Reporting Deadline for Spring Alfalfa Seed and all other crops.

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To file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax at (202) 690-7442 or e-mail at [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.