



NEWSLETTER



May 2015

Idaho Farm Service Agency

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www.fsa.usda.gov/id

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To find contact information for your local office you can go to www.fsa.usda.gov/id and select County Offices.

MESSAGE FROM MARK SAMSON

GovDelivery System: Getting what you want (or need)!

In this technology age, our email “Inbox” is bombarded with messages. Sorting through the important (business and family), the advertisements and the jokes is time consuming and sometimes limits your ability to efficiently manage your business.

When the USDA Farm Service Agency adopted its Electronic Newsletter a few years ago, the intent was to make it easier and quicker to provide information that you need to successfully manage your participation in our programs. The intent was also to provide the majority of the information regarding what is required at your County office.

Certainly, we would like to provide more “print newsletters” but constraints in funding prohibit mailings on a consistent basis. We must rely on GovDelivery for the majority of our communication to you.

If you have signed up for GovDelivery – I highly encourage you to do so – and you receive more than four (4) emails per month, you may have inadvertently signed up to receive more notifications than you intended or need.

When you signed up, the first email you should have received was a welcome message from your County Executive Director (CED). Then on a monthly basis you should have received one newsletter sent by the state office and two additional bulletins from your CED. Occasionally the National Office will send out a reminder of an important deadline or the Idaho State Office will send a special bulletin. In the past 12 months there have been a total of six messages from FSA’s National Office and a total of 13 messages from the State office on special topics such as ARC/PLC .

If you are receiving notifications for Cotton, Tobacco or other topics which you have no interest, you may want to check your preferences in the GovDelivery System.

At the end of every email there is a *Manage Preferences* link that takes you to a website where you can check the topics which you have subscribed. The first topic is “About FSA”: If you have a checkmark in that box you are going to receive a lot of emails.

If you want only information from your County, make sure that only the name of your county is checked. As you scroll down through the Subscription Topics, if there is a checked box, you have subscribed to receive information on that topic!

As you scroll down further in the Subscription Topics you will see “Updates by State and County”. Do not check the box next to this topic. Instead, click on the + sign next to the “Updates by State and County” box, then click on the + sign next to Idaho in the list of states and last, put a check mark in the name of your county. If any of the other boxes are marked with a check, you may want to remove them if you want to limit the number of emails you receive through GovDelivery.

I hope that the information provided will eliminate the problem of “inbox overload”. We want you to receive the important information you need to successfully operate your farm or ranch, nothing more or nothing less. The County office is your most important source of information.

MAINTAINING THE QUALITY OF LOANED GRAIN

Bins are ideally designed to hold a level volume of grain. When bins are overfilled and grain is heaped up, airflow is hindered and the chance of spoilage increases.

Producers who take out marketing assistance loans and use the farm-stored grain as collateral should remember that they are responsible for maintaining the quality of the grain through the term of the loan.

UNAUTHORIZED DISPOSITION OF GRAIN

If loaned grain has been disposed of through feeding, selling or any other form of disposal without prior written authorization from the county office staff, it is considered unauthorized disposition. The financial penalties for unauthorized dispositions are severe and a producer's name will be placed on a loan violation list for a two-year period. Always call before you haul any grain under loan.

MICROLOANS

Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds farmers and ranchers that the FSA borrowing limit for microloans increased from \$35,000 to \$50,000, on Nov. 7, 2014. 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, more than 50 percent of USDA's farm loans now go to beginning farmers and FSA has increased its lending to targeted underserved producers by nearly 50 percent.

Please review the FSA Microloan Program Fact Sheet for program application, eligibility and related information.

MANY IDAHO COUNTIES ELIGIBLE FOR EMERGENCY LOANS DUE TO DROUGHT DESIGNATION

In recent weeks six additional counties were declared as primary disaster areas due to drought and heat using the streamlined Secretarial Disaster Designation process. Under this designation, producers with operations in any primary or contiguous county are eligible to apply for low interest emergency loans.

Adding the contiguous counties means the following counties are eligible for emergency loans:

Ada, Bingham, Blaine, Boise, Butte, Camas, Canyon, Cassia, Clark, Custer, Elmore, Gem, Gooding, Jefferson, Jerome, Lemhi, Lincoln, Minidoka, Owyhee, Payette, Twin Falls and Washington.

The streamlined disaster designation process issues a drought disaster declaration when a county has experienced a drought intensity value of at least a D2 (severe drought) level for eight consecutive weeks based on the U.S. Drought Monitor during the crop year.

Emergency loans help producers recover from production and physical losses due to drought, flooding and other natural disasters or quarantine.

Producers have eight months from the date of the declaration to apply for emergency loan assistance. FSA will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability. Producers can borrow up to 100 percent of actual production or physical losses, to a maximum amount of \$500,000.

For more information about emergency loans, please contact your local FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

Ask FSA

Are you looking for answers to your FSA questions? Then ASK FSA at askfsa.custhelp.com.

AskFSA is an online resource that helps you easily find information and answers to your FSA questions no matter where you are or what device you use. It is for ALL customers, including underserved farmers and ranchers who wish to be enrolled in FSA loans, farm, and conservation programs.

Through AskFSA you can:

- Access our knowledge base 24/7
- Receive answers to your questions faster
- Submit a question and receive a timely response from an FSA expert
- Get notifications when answers important to you and your farming operation are updated
- Customize your account settings and view responses at any time.

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 or visit the website at www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation.

LIVESTOCK FORAGE DISASTER PROGRAM (LFP)

Producers in Blaine, Butte, Canyon, Custer, Elmore, Minidoka, Owyhee, Payette, Twin Falls and Washington counties are eligible to apply for 2015 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) benefits on small grain, native pasture, improved pasture, 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.

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FOR LIVESTOCK, HONEYBEE, AND FARM RAISED FISH PROGRAM (ELAP)

The Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) provides emergency assistance to eligible livestock, honeybee, and farm-raised fish producers who have losses due to disease, adverse weather or other conditions, such as blizzards and wildfires, not covered by other agricultural disaster assistance programs.

Eligible livestock losses include grazing losses not covered under the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP), loss of purchased feed and/or mechanically harvested feed due to an eligible adverse weather event, additional cost of transporting water because of an eligible drought and additional cost associated with gathering livestock to treat for cattle tick fever.

Eligible honeybee losses include loss of purchased feed due to an eligible adverse weather event, cost of additional feed purchased above normal quantities due to an eligible adverse weather condition, colony losses in excess of normal mortality due to an eligible weather event or loss condition, including CCD, and hive losses due to eligible adverse weather.

Eligible farm-raised fish losses include death losses in excess of normal mortality and/or loss of purchased feed due to an eligible adverse weather event.

Producers who suffer eligible livestock, honeybee, or farm-raised fish losses from October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015 must file:

- A notice of loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent or by November 1, 2015
- An application for payment by November 1, 2015

The Farm Bill caps ELAP disaster funding at \$20 million per federal fiscal year.

The following ELAP Fact Sheets (by topic) are available online at www.fsa.usda.gov/factsheets:

- ELAP for Farm-Raised Fish Fact Sheet
- ELAP for Livestock Fact Sheet
- ELAP for Honeybees Fact Sheet

DATES TO REMEMBER	
May 31	Final availability date for Marketing Assistance Loans and Loan Deficiency Payments
June 1	Deadline to certify conservation compliance to remain eligible for crop insurance subsidy
June 1	Deadline to pay MPP Buy-up premiums
June 1	Deadline for MAL and LDP on Corn, Dry Peas, Grain Sorghum, Lentils, Mustard Seed, Rice, Safflower Seed, Chickpeas, Soybeans, Sunflower Seed
July 15	Crop Reporting Deadline
April 1 – August 1	Primary Nesting Season – No Grazing on CRP acres.

Selected Interest Rates for May 2015	
Farm Operating Loans — Direct	2.50%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct	3.625%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.50%
Direct Farm Ownership - Joint Financing	2.50%
Emergency Loans	3.50%
Farm Storage Facility Loans (7 years)	1.75%
Farm Storage Facility Loans (12 years)	2.00%

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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, 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. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer