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Illinois FSA Newsletter

Illinois Farm Service Agency

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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

Administrative Officer: previously enrolled under previously administered programs.
Dan Puccetti

Division Chiefs: 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.
Doug Bailey
Jeff Koch
Stan Wilson

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

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>

USDA Announces Changes to Fruit, Vegetable and Wild Rice Planting Rules

Farm Service Agency (FSA) has announced fruit, vegetable and wild rice provisions that affect producers who intend to participate in certain programs authorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014.

Producers who intend to participate in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs are subject to an acre-for-acre payment reduction when fruits and nuts, vegetables or wild rice are planted on the payment acres of a farm. Payment reductions do not apply to mung beans, dry peas, lentils or chickpeas. Planting fruits, vegetables or wild rice on acres that are not considered payment acres will not result in a payment reduction. Farms that are eligible to participate in ARC/PLC but are not enrolled for a particular year may plant unlimited fruits, vegetables and wild rice for that year but will not receive ARC/PLC payments for that year. Eligibility for succeeding years is not affected.

Planting and harvesting fruits, vegetables and wild rice on ARC/PLC acreage is subject to the acre-for-acre payment reduction when those crops are planted on either more than 15 percent of the base acres of a farm enrolled in ARC using the county coverage or PLC, or more than 35 percent of the base acres of a farm enrolled in ARC using the individual coverage.

Fruits, vegetables and wild rice that are planted in a double-cropping practice will not cause a payment reduction if the farm is in a double-cropping region as designated by the USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation.

ARC, PLC and CTAP Acreage Maintenance

Producers enrolled in Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC), Price Loss Coverage (PLC) or the Cotton Transition Assistance Program (CTAP) must protect all cropland and noncropland acres on the farm from wind and water erosion and noxious weeds. Producers who sign ARC county or individual

contracts and PLC contracts agree to effectively control noxious weeds on the farm according to sound agricultural practices. If a producer fails to take necessary actions to correct a maintenance problem on a farm that is enrolled in ARC, PLC or CTAP, the County Committee may elect to terminate the contract for the program year.

COnduct USDA Business Online by Creating an eAuthentication Account

The Internet allows you, the customer, access to USDA information 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can fill out and submit electronic forms (eForms) any time of the day or night from anywhere you have Internet access. This new service delivery option allows you to complete and file your own forms or applications online, because your signature is already electronically "on file."

Information submitted to the Federal Government remains safe and secure because every customer has a unique User ID and password; only authorized USDA employees can access your information. It's safe, saves paper, saves a visit to your local USDA Service Center and provides electronic tracking of all your USDA transactions.

How to Sign Up for eAuth :

Begin the process by reviewing the information at the USDA Website <https://www.eauth.usda.gov>. This website describes the services available for Level 1 and Level 2 Accounts. Level 1 and Level 2 accounts require that you have an email address so you can register, create a customer profile, and be able to respond to a confirmation email. Level 1 Accounts do not require you to provide proof of your identity at a local USDA Service Center. Level 1 Accounts provide limited access to certain USDA Web site portals that require no authentication or authorization. A Level 2 Account does require a visit to a USDA Service Center with proof of your identity. That is because a Level 2 account allows you access to complete and submit documents and forms electronically.

LEVEL 1 ACCOUNT

STEP 1. To obtain a Level 1 Account, you may self-register online at www.eauth.egov.usda.gov.

Scroll down and click on the button that says "Sign Up for a Level 1 Account." Complete the brief customer profile.

STEP 2. You will receive a confirmation email, and you must respond to it within 7 days to activate your account.

LEVEL 2 ACCOUNT

STEP1. To obtain a Level 2 Account, you must complete an 18 question customer profile and prove your identity by presenting state or federal photo ID at a local USDA Service Center. Go to www.eauth.egov.usda.gov, scroll down and click on "Sign Up for a Level 2 Account." Complete your customer profile, which includes designating your user ID and password created by you, contact information and email information. The data you enter in your customer profile must match the data on the document you use as identification at your local USDA Service Center. Example: Your first and last names and address must match the government-issued photo ID you plan to use to prove your identity. Identify proof can only be verified by one of the following documents: Current State Driver's License, State Photo ID, US Military ID, or United States Passport.

STEP 2. After completing your customer profile and submitting it online, you will receive a

confirmation email, and you must respond to it within 7 days to activate your account.

STEP 3. Then you must complete the "Identify Proofing" process by visiting a local USDA Service Center. You will be required to present the eligible photo ID to an USDA employee who will verify your identity and enter the expiration date of the ID document used.

STEP 4. The USDA employee then will update your customer profile to a Level 2 Account. You will have access to USDA online applications and forms within one hour of your account being updated.

You now have access to complete and submit documents and forms electronically. USDA continues to update and make more forms and programs available electronically.

Producers Must Report Prevented Planting and Failed Acres

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds producers to report prevented planting and failed acres in order to establish or retain FSA program eligibility.

Producers must report crop acreage they intended to plant, but due to natural disaster, were prevented from planting. Prevented planting acreage must be reported on form FSA-576, Notice of Loss, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by RMA.

If a producer is unable to report the prevented planting acreage within the 15 calendar days following the final planting date, a late-filed report can be submitted. Late-filed reports will only be accepted if FSA conducts a farm visit to assess the eligible disaster condition that prevented the crop from being planted. A measurement service fee will be charged.

Additionally, producers with failed acres should also use form FSA-576, Notice of Loss, to report failed acres before disposition of the crop.

For losses on crops covered by the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), producers must file a Notice of Loss:

- For prevented planted acreage, within calendar days after the final planting date
- For low yield, the earlier of
 - o 15 calendar days after the disaster occurrence or date of loss to the crop first becomes apparent
 - o 15 calendar days after the normal harvest date.

Please contact the local County FSA Office to schedule an appointment to file a Notice of Loss. To find your local FSA office visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Producers with CRP Contracts Scheduled to Expire September 30, 2015

CRP contracts scheduled to expire on September 30, 2015 may be eligible for one or more of the following options:

- **1-Year Extension.** Producers with expiring general CRP contracts that are 14 years or less in length, may submit a request to extend the expiration for an additional year under the same terms and conditions as the expiring contract(s), including the rental rate per acre. General sign-up

contracts which are already 15 years in length are not eligible for an extension, but may be eligible for a combination of the other options described below. The sign-up for the 1-year extension is June 22, 2015 through August 28, 2015.

- **Continuous Re-enrollment in a new 10- to 15-year CRP contract.** Producers with an expiring CRP contract may re-enroll all or a portion of the expiring acreage. The acreage may be eligible to be enrolled in a new 10- to 15-year continuous CRP contract. If interested in re-enrolling expiring acreage, please submit an offer at your local FSA office no later than September 4, 2015.
- **Transition Incentive Program (TIP).** For those producers with an expiring contract who are not planning to farm the land themselves, TIP may provide two additional annual rental payments on the condition a producer sells or rents their land to a beginning farmer or rancher or a member of an underserved group. New landowners or renters are required to use sustainable grazing or farming methods as they return the land to production. TIP offers a way to create new farming opportunities while continuing conservation efforts. If interested in TIP, contact your local FSA office no later than September 4, 2015.
- **Contract Expiration.** If a producer does nothing, their CRP contract will expire. Producers will receive their final payment in October in 2015. They may plant, graze, or hay the acreage after September 30, 2015. Since CRP land typically does not have a recent history of pesticide or herbicide application, the land may be valuable for organic production without a transition period. Prior to contract expiration, producers should visit with the local FSA office and review the current crop acreage base re-instatement provisions. Before planting, check with FSA or Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to see if the land is subject to conservation and wetland compliance provisions.

Producers should contact their local FSA Office to reinstate crop acreage bases if they were reduced when the contract was originally approved. Expired contract acres that were devoted to trees will no longer be considered cropland and may be ineligible for subsequent CRP contracts and other farm programs.

- **Conservation Easements or Working Lands Programs.** CRP land may transition into conservation easements to provide longer term benefits. NRCS's Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) or state or private easement programs may be an option. If a producer is planning to convert CRP land to agriculture use, the forthcoming CRP grasslands initiative, NRCS's working lands Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), or the Environmental Quality Incentives Program may be available to address a producer's resource needs. In many cases, a combination of approaches can be taken on the same parcel.

Producers should contact their local USDA Service Center, or visit <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/crp> to explore possible options.

Tree Assistance Program (TAP) Sign-up

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).

Orchardists and nursery tree growers who experience losses from natural disasters during calendar year 2015 must submit a TAP application either 90 calendar days after the disaster event or the date when the loss is apparent. TAP was authorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014 as a permanent

disaster program. TAP provides financial assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines damaged by natural disasters.

Eligible tree types include trees, bushes or vines that produce an annual crop for commercial purposes. Nursery trees include ornamental, fruit, nut and Christmas trees that are produced for commercial sale. Trees used for pulp or timber are ineligible.

To qualify for TAP, orchardists must suffer a qualifying tree, bush or vine loss in excess of 15 percent mortality from an eligible natural disaster. The eligible trees, bushes or vines must have been owned when the natural disaster occurred; however, eligible growers are not required to own the land on which the eligible trees, bushes and vines were planted.

If the TAP application is approved, the eligible trees, bushes and vines must be replaced within 12 months from the date the application is approved. The cumulative total quantity of acres planted to trees, bushes or vines, for which a producer can receive TAP payments, cannot exceed 500 acres annually.
