

December 2015



Having trouble viewing this email? [View it as a Web page.](#)

- [2015 Happy Holidays to all the Illinois Agriculture Producers](#)
- [Enrollment Period for 2016 USDA Safety Net Coverage Begins Dec. 7](#)
- [Update Your Records](#)
- [Secretary Vilsack Announces Additional 800,000 Acres Dedicated to Conservation Reserve Program for Wildlife Habitat and Wetlands](#)
- [Tree Assistance Program \(TAP\) Sign-up](#)
- [USDA Creates More Bird Habitat Opportunities on Irrigated Farmland](#)
- [Filing CCC-941 Adjusted Gross Income \(AGI\) Certifications](#)
- [NAP Deadline Approaching for 2016 Crops](#)
- [2016 Acreage Reporting Dates](#)
- [USDA Issues Safety-Net Payments to Illinois Farmers Facing Market Downturn](#)
- [New Provisions - USDA Adds More Eligible Commodities for Farm Storage Facility Loans \(FSFL's\)](#)
- [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#)
- [MAL's Available for Crop Years 2015-2018](#)
- [Livestock Indemnity Program \(LIP\)](#)
- [USDA Announces \\$210 Million to be Invested in Renewable Energy Infrastructure through the Biofuel Infrastructure Partnership](#)
- [December Interest Rates](#)
- [Unauthorized Disposition of Grain](#)
- [Dairy Indemnity Payment Program \(DIPP\)](#)
- [Dates to Remember](#)

---

## Illinois December FSA Newsletter

---

### Illinois Farm Service Agency

3500 Wabash Ave  
Springfield, IL 62711

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

### State Committee:

Jill Appell-Chairperson  
Brenda Hill-Member

### 2015 Happy Holidays to all the Illinois Agriculture Producers

We Illinois FSA employees wish you the happiest of holidays and send many thanks to each of you.

This past year has been an educational event for all of us. With the participation of FSA employees, the University of Illinois faculty and the Illinois Farm Bureau we rolled out a spectacular education effort

Jerry Jimenez-Member  
Joyce Matthews-Member  
Gordon Stine-Member

**State Executive**

**Director:**

Scherrie V. Giamanco

**State Executive Officer:**

Rick Graden

**Administrative Officer:**

Dan Puccetti

**Division Chiefs:**

Doug Bailey

Jeff Koch

Stan Wilson

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

that would have been wasted if Illinois producers hadn't participated by attending the many seminars. Producer participation was the key element to the success of the teamwork that shared all the information available and enabled participation in the new ARC PLC program. We are so pleased to report to you that Illinois enrolled more producers and farms than any other state in the nation. Only you made this possible. Thank you again and again.

As we prepare for 2016 we hope and pray that your family is successful in all that you do; that good health is your experience; that abundance finds you each day; that we reach ever higher levels of security; that American agriculture continues to feed the world; and that we can one day see Peace on Earth.

Again many thanks for the being our customer and feeding the world.

Happy Holidays to all,  
Scherrie V Giamanco

## **Enrollment Period for 2016 USDA Safety Net Coverage Begins Dec. 7**

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has announced that producers who chose coverage from the safety net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill, known as the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, can begin visiting FSA county offices starting Dec. 7, 2015, to sign contracts to enroll in coverage for 2016. The enrollment period will continue until Aug. 1, 2016.

Although the choice between ARC and PLC is completed and remains in effect through 2018, producers must still enroll their farm by signing a contract each year to receive coverage.

Producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office to schedule an appointment to enroll. If a farm is not enrolled during the 2016 enrollment period, producers on that farm will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs should crop prices or farm revenues fall below the historical price or revenue benchmarks established by the program.

The two programs were authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill and offer a safety net to agricultural producers when there is a substantial drop in prices or revenues for covered commodities. 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 and sweet rice), safflower seed, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat. Upland cotton is no longer a covered commodity. For more details regarding these programs, go to [www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc).

For more information, producers are encouraged to visit their local FSA office. To find a local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>

---

## Update Your Records

FSA is cleaning up our producer record database. If you have any unreported changes of address or zip code or an incorrect name or business name on file they need to be reported to our office. Changes in your farm operation, like the addition of a farm by lease or purchase, need to be reported to our office as well. Producers participating in FSA and NRCS programs are required to timely report changes in their farming operation to the County Committee in writing and update their CCC-902 Farm Operating Plan.

If you have any updates or corrections, please call your local FSA office to update your records.

---

## Secretary Vilsack Announces Additional 800,000 Acres Dedicated to Conservation Reserve Program for Wildlife Habitat and Wetlands

Secretary Hails Program's 30th Anniversary, Announces General Signup Period

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that an additional 800,000 acres of highly environmentally sensitive land may be enrolled in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) under certain wetland and wildlife initiatives that provide multiple benefits on the same land.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will accept new offers to participate in CRP under a general signup to be held Dec. 1, 2015, through Feb. 26, 2016. Eligible existing program participants with contracts expiring Sept. 30, 2015, will be granted an option for one-year extensions. Farmers and ranchers interested in removing sensitive land from agricultural production and planting grasses or trees to reduce soil erosion, improve water quality and restore wildlife habitat are encouraged to enroll.

For 30 years, the Conservation Reserve Program has helped farmers and ranchers prevent more than 8 billion tons of soil from eroding, reduce nitrogen and phosphorous runoff relative to cropland by 95 and 85 percent respectively, and even sequester 43 million tons of greenhouse gases annually, equal to taking 8 million cars off the road.

The voluntary Conservation Reserve Program allows USDA to contract with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive land is conserved. Participants establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat. In return, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years.

CRP protects water quality and restores significant habitat for ducks, pheasants, turkey, quail, deer and other important wildlife which spurs economic development like hunting and fishing, outdoor recreation and tourism across rural America. Today's announcement allows an additional 800,000 acres for duck nesting habitat and other wetland and wildlife habitat initiatives to be enrolled in the program.

Farmers and ranchers should consider the various CRP continuous sign-up initiatives that may help target specific resource concerns. Financial assistance is offered for many practices including conservation buffers and pollinator habitat plantings, and initiatives such as the highly erodible lands, bottomland hardwood tree and longleaf pine.

Farmers and ranchers may visit their FSA county office for additional information. The 2014 Farm Bill authorized the enrollment of grasslands in CRP and information on grasslands enrollment will be available after the regulation is published later this summer.

For more information on CRP and other FSA programs, please visit [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

---

## **Tree Assistance Program (TAP) Sign-up**

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.

---

## **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).

---

## **Filing CCC-941 Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) Certifications**

Many producers have experienced delays in receiving Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) payments, Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs) and Market Gains on Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) because they have not filed form CCC-941, Adjusted Gross Income Certification. LDPs will not be paid until all eligible producers, including landowners who share in the crop, have filed a valid CCC-941.

Producers without a valid CCC-941 certifying their compliance with the average adjusted gross income provisions will not receive payments that have been processed. All farm operator/tenants/owners who have not filed a CCC-941 and have pending payments should IMMEDIATELY file the form with their recording county FSA office. Farm operators and tenants are encouraged to ensure that their landowners have filed the form. FSA has been issuing 2014 ARC/PLC payments, 2015 LDPs and Market Gains.

FSA can accept the CCC-941 for 2014, 2015 and 2016. Unlike the past, producers must have the CCC-941 certifying their AGI compliance before any payments can be issued.

---

## **NAP Deadline Approaching for 2016 Crops**

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) applications are due at different times, depending on the crop being insured.

August 31, 2015 was the 2016 NAP application closing date for canola.

September 1, 2015 was the 2016 NAP application closing date for value loss crops, such as, aquaculture, Christmas trees, ornamental nursery, and turfgrass sod.

September 30, 2015 was the 2016 NAP application closing date for mechanically harvested forage, grazed forage, and fall seeded small grains.

November 20, 2015 was the 2016 NAP application closing date for bi-annual and perennial crops, such as apples, asparagus, blueberries, caneberries, cherries, grapes, hops, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums, rhubarb, and strawberries.

December 1, 2015 was the 2016 NAP application closing date for honey.

March 15, 2016 is the 2016 NAP application closing date for spring and summer planted NAP crops.

May 1, 2016 is the 2017 NAP application closing date for nursery crops.

Eligible producers can apply for 2016 NAP coverage at their local FSA Office using form CCC-471, Application for Coverage. The service fee for basic NAP coverage is the lesser of \$250 per crop or \$750 per producer per administrative county, not to exceed a total of \$1,875 for a producer with farming interest in multiple counties. Producers interested in buy-up coverage must pay a premium, in addition to the service fee. The maximum premium will be \$6,563.

Producers meeting the definition of a socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher, beginning farmer or rancher or limited resource farmer or rancher will have service fees waived. Producers meeting this definition that choose to purchase buy-up coverage will also have service fees waived and the premium will be capped at \$3,282.

---

## 2016 Acreage Reporting Dates

Producers who file accurate and timely reports for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage can prevent the potential loss of FSA program benefits. Please pay close attention to the acreage reporting dates below, as some dates have changed.

In order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements, all producers are encouraged to visit their local County FSA office to file an accurate crop certification report by the applicable deadline.

The following 2016 acreage reporting dates are applicable for Illinois:

September 30, 2015	aquaculture, Christmas trees, turfgrass sod, floriculture
December 15, 2015	fall seeded small grains and perennial forage with an intended use of forage and grazing
January 2, 2016	honey
January 15, 2016	apples, asparagus, blueberries, caneberries, cherries, grapes, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums, strawberries
June 15, 2016 Counties	cucumbers (planted 5/1 – 5/31) in Gallatin, Lawrence, and White

July 15, 2016	cabbage (planted 3/15-5/31), perennial forage (with an intended use of cover only, green manure, left standing, or seed) and all other crops
August 15, 2016	cabbage (planted 6/1 – 7/20)
September 15, 2016	cucumbers (planted 6/1 – 8/15) in Gallatin, Lawrence, and White Counties

The following exceptions apply to the above acreage reporting dates:

If the crop has not been planted by the above 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 above 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 15, 2016.

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.

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.

---

## **USDA Issues Safety-Net Payments to Illinois Farmers Facing Market Downturn**

The USDA Farm Service Agency has begun issuing financial assistance for the 2014 crop year to those agricultural producers who are participating in the new safety-net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill. The new programs, known as Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC), are designed to protect against unexpected drops in crop prices or revenues due to market downturns.

Unlike the old direct payments program, which provided funds in good years and bad years, these new programs only provide financial assistance when prices or revenues drop below normal. For example, nationwide, farms participating in ARC-County that are receiving payments experienced a \$20 billion drop in revenues relative to the historical benchmark.

Also, please note that funds provided by the ARC-County program can vary from county to county. The 2014 Farm Bill requires ARC-County payments to be calculated using the national average market year price (which does not vary by county), and the average county yield (which varies by county). This creates county-by-county differences in payment rates. The yield data comes from surveys conducted by the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the national standard that uses the highest-precision statistical procedures available.

Where that data does not exist, the next strongest data is used: county-level crop insurance data from the Risk Management Agency. If that data does not exist, the next strongest data is used: NASS district data. Where NASS district data doesn't exist, the FSA State Committees provide data.

Because the new programs are designed as financial assistance for prices and revenues lower than normal, not all producers will receive a payment, (as occurred with the old direct payments program). ARC/PLC payments are designed to help with unexpected changes in the marketplace, and to supplement other assistance programs, such as crop insurance. To learn more about the data used in calculating payments, how payments are calculated, crop-specific and state-specific information, please visit our website at [www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc).

---

## **New Provisions - USDA Adds More Eligible Commodities for Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFL's)**

FSA's FSFL program, provides low-interest financing to producers to build or upgrade storage facilities, and will now include dairy, flowers and meats as eligible commodities.

The new commodities eligible for facility loans include floriculture, hops, rye, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, meat and poultry (unprocessed), eggs, and aquaculture (excluding systems that maintain live animals through uptake and discharge of water). Commodities already eligible for the loans include corn, grain sorghum, soybeans, oats, wheat, barley, minor oilseeds harvested as whole grain, pulse crops (lentils, chickpeas and dry peas), hay, honey, renewable biomass, and fruits, nuts and vegetables for cold storage facilities.

FSFL's are designed to assist a diverse range of farming operations, including small and mid-sized businesses, new farmers, operations supplying local food and farmers markets, non-traditional farm products, and underserved producers.

To learn more about FSFL's, visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport) or contact your local FSA county office.

---

## **Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)**

ELAP provides emergency assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybees and farm-raised fish that have losses due to disease, adverse weather, or other conditions, such as blizzards and wildfires.

Producers who suffer eligible livestock, honeybee, or farm-raised fish losses from October 1, 2015 to September 30, 2016 must file:

A notice of loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent or by November 1, 2016.

An application for payment by November 1, 2016.

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

To view ELAP Farm-Raised Fish, ELAP for Livestock or ELAP for Honeybee fact sheets visit the FSA fact sheet web page at [www.fsa.usda.gov/factsheets](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/factsheets).

---

## **MAL's Available for Crop Years 2015-2018**

The 2014 farm bill authorizes 2014-2018 crop year Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL's).

MALs 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.

FSA is now accepting requests for 2015 crop MALs for all eligible commodities after harvest.

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: ARC PLC, marketing loan gains (MLGs) and LDPs. These payment limitations do not apply to MAL loan disbursements.

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

---

## **Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)**

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to eligible producers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to an extreme or abnormal adverse weather event and/or attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law. LIP compensates livestock owners and contract growers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather, including losses due to hurricanes, floods, blizzards, wildfires, extreme heat or extreme cold.

For 2015, eligible losses must occur on or after Jan. 1, 2015, and before December 31, 2015. A notice of loss must be filed with FSA within 30 days of when the loss of livestock is apparent. Participants must provide the following supporting documentation to their local FSA office no later than 30 calendar days after the end of the calendar year for which benefits are requested:

Proof of death documentation

Copy of growers contracts

Proof of normal mortality documentation

---

## **USDA Announces \$210 Million to be Invested in Renewable Energy Infrastructure through the Biofuel Infrastructure Partnership**

USDA is partnering with 21 states through the Biofuel Infrastructure Partnership (BIP) to nearly double the number of fueling pumps nationwide that supply renewable fuels to American motorists. In May 2015, USDA announced the availability of [\\$100 million in grants through the BIP](#), and that to apply states and private partners match the federal funding by a 1:1 ratio. USDA received applications requesting over \$130 million, outpacing the \$100 million that is available. With the matching commitments by state and private entities, the BIP is investing a total of \$210 million to strengthen the rural economy.

The 21 states participating in the BIP include Illinois. To see a list of all the participating states and the amount awarded to each state please visit: [www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/energy-programs/bip/index](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/energy-programs/bip/index). The final awards being are estimated to expand infrastructure by nearly 5,000 pumps at over 1,400 fueling stations.

A typical gas pump delivers fuel with 10 percent ethanol, which limits the amount of renewable energy that consumers can purchase. The new partnership will increase the number of pumps, storage and related infrastructure that will offer higher blends of ethanol, such as E15, E85, and even intermediate combination blends.

USDA's Office of the Chief Economist just released a comprehensive report on ethanol. The report, titled U.S. Ethanol: An Examination of Policy, Production, Use, Distribution, and Market Interactions, brings clarity to the complex interaction of ethanol production with agricultural markets and government policies. The corn ethanol industry is the largest biofuel producer in the country, with production increasing from about 1.6 billion gallons in 2000 to just over 14 billion gallons in 2014, stimulating economic activity in rural communities. Visit [www.usda.gov/oce/reports/energy/EthanolExamination102015.pdf](http://www.usda.gov/oce/reports/energy/EthanolExamination102015.pdf) to read the complete report.

For more information concerning BIP and involvement by the USDA Farm Service Agency, visit: [www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/energy-programs/index](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/energy-programs/index).

---

## December Interest Rates

Commodity Loans 1996-Present	1.37%
Farm Storage Facility Loans 7 Year	2.00%
Farm Storage Facility Loans 10 Year	2.25%
Farm Storage Facility Loans 12 Year	2.37%
Farm Ownership-Beginning Farmer	1.500%
Emergency Farm Loans	3.375%

---

## Unauthorized Disposition of Grain

If loan 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.

---

## Dairy Indemnity Payment Program (DIPP)

The 2014 Farm Bill authorized the extension of the Dairy Indemnity Payment Program (DIPP) through September 30, 2018. DIPP provides payments to dairy producers and manufacturers of

dairy products when they are directed to remove their raw milk or products from the market because of contamination.

---

## Dates to Remember

Dec. 1 - Feb. 26	Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) General Sign Up
December 7	ARC/PLC 2016 Enrollment Begins
December 25	Christmas Day Holiday - USDA Service Center Closed
December 31	Deadline for 2015 - Livestock Losses for LIP Deadline
January 1	New Year's Day Holiday - USDA Service Center Closed
January 30	Deadline to submit LIP supporting documentation and application for LIP payment

---

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).

---