

May 2017



Farm Service Agency

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NEWSLETTER

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Illinois FSA Newsletter

Illinois Farm Service Agency

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To find contact information for your local office go to

www.fsa.usda.gov/il

Enrollment Period for 2017 Safety Net Coverage Continues Through Aug. 1

Producers on farms with base acres under the safety net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill, known as the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, can visit their local FSA office to sign contracts and enroll for the 2017 crop year. The enrollment period will continue until Aug. 1, 2017.

Since shares and ownership of a farm can change year-to-year, producers on the farm must enroll by signing a contract each program year.

If a farm is not enrolled during the 2017 enrollment period, the producers on that farm will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs for the 2017 crop should crop prices or farm revenues fall below the historical price or revenue benchmarks established by the program. Producers who made their elections in 2015 must still enroll during the 2017 enrollment period.

The ARC and PLC 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.

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

Sonny Perdue Sworn in as 31st U.S. Secretary of Agriculture

Sonny Perdue was sworn in as the 31st U.S. Secretary of Agriculture by fellow Georgian and Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court Clarence Thomas in a brief ceremony on April 25 at the Supreme Court building.

Perdue grew up on a dairy and diversified row crop farm in Bonaire, Georgia. Being uniquely qualified as a former farmer, agribusinessman, veterinarian, state legislator and governor of Georgia, he has experienced the agriculture industry from every possible perspective throughout his life.

As secretary, Perdue says he will champion the concerns of farmers, ranchers, foresters and producers, and will work tirelessly to solve the issues facing our farm families.

Perdue's policies as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture will be guided by four principles which will inform his decisions. First, he will maximize the ability of the men and women of America's agriculture and agribusiness sector to create jobs, to produce and sell the foods and fiber that feed and clothe the world, and to reap the earned reward of their labor. Second, he will prioritize customer service every day for American taxpayers and consumers. Third, as Americans expect a safe and secure food supply, USDA will continue to serve in the critical role of ensuring the food we put on the table to feed our families meets the strict safety standards we've established. And fourth, Perdue will always remember that America's agricultural bounty comes directly from the land.

For more information about Secretary Perdue, visit www.usda.gov.

Report Livestock Losses

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to eligible producers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law. Additionally, 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 2017, eligible losses must occur on or after Jan. 1, 2017, and no later than 60 calendar days from the ending date of the applicable adverse weather event or attack. 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 90 calendar days after the end of the calendar year in which the eligible loss condition occurred:

- Beginning and Ending Inventory
- Proof of death documentation
- Copy of growers contracts
- Proof of normal mortality documentation

Additional information about LIP is available at your local FSA office or online at: www.fsa.usda.gov.

Direct Loans

FSA offers direct farm ownership and direct farm operating loans to producers who want to establish, maintain or strengthen their farm or ranch. FSA loan officers process, approve and service direct loans.

Direct farm operating loans can be used to purchase livestock and feed, farm equipment, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance and other costs including family living expenses. Operating loans can also be used to finance minor improvements or repairs to buildings and to refinance some farm-related debts, excluding real estate.

Direct farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, enlarge an existing farm, construct and repair buildings, and to make farm improvements.

The maximum loan amount for both direct farm ownership and operating loans is \$300,000 and a down payment is not required. Repayment terms vary depending on the type of loan, collateral and the producer's ability to repay the loan. Operating loans are normally repaid within seven years and farm ownership loans are not to exceed 40 years.

Please contact your local FSA office for more information or to apply for a direct farm ownership or operating loan.

Emergency Livestock Assistance Program (ELAP)

Due to the excessive rainfall and flooding you may be eligible for ELAP benefits for feed losses of purchased or mechanically harvested forage or feed stuffs. Eligible feed losses under ELAP are losses:

- Of purchased forage or feedstuffs;
- Of mechanically harvested forage or feedstuffs;
- Resulting from the additional costs incurred for transporting feed to eligible livestock because of an eligible adverse weather or loss condition; and
- Resulting from the additional costs of purchasing additional feed, above normal quantities, required to maintain eligible livestock during an eligible adverse weather or loss condition, until additional livestock feed becomes available.

Additional information about ELAP is available at your local FSA office or online at: www.fsa.usda.gov

Fruit, Vegetable and Wild Rice Planting Rules

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.

USDA Offers Loans for Portable Farm Storage and Handling Equipment

Portable Equipment Can Help Producers, including Small-Scale and Local Farmers, Get Products to Market Quickly

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides financing to help farmers purchase portable storage and handling equipment through the Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program. The loans, now include a smaller microloan option with lower down payments, are designed to help producers, including new, small and mid-sized producers, grow their businesses and markets. The FSFL program allows producers of eligible commodities to obtain low-interest financing to build or upgrade farm storage and handling facilities.

The program also offers a "microloan" option, which allows applicants seeking less than \$50,000 to qualify for a reduced down payment of five percent and no requirement to provide three years of production history, with CCC providing a loan for the remaining 95 percent of the net cost of the eligible FSFL equipment. Farms and ranches of all sizes are eligible. The microloan option is expected to be of particular benefit to smaller farms and ranches, and specialty crop producers who may not have access to commercial storage or on-farm storage after harvest. These producers can invest in equipment like conveyers, scales or refrigeration units and trucks that can store commodities before delivering them to markets. FSFL microloans can also be used to finance wash and pack equipment used post-harvest, before a commodity is placed in cold storage. Producers do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply for FSFL's.

Larger farming and ranching operations, that may not be able to participate in the new "microloan" option, may apply for the traditional, larger FSFL's with the maximum principal amount for each loan through FSFL of \$500,000.00. Participants are required to provide a down payment of 15 percent, with CCC providing a loan for the remaining 85 percent of the net cost of the eligible storage facility and permanent drying and handling equipment. Additional security is required for poured-cement open-bunker silos, renewable biomass facilities, cold storage facilities, hay barns and for all loans exceeding \$100,000.00. FSFL loan terms of 3, 5, 7, 10 or 12 years are available depending on the amount of the loan. Interest rates for each term rate may be different and are based on the rate which CCC borrows from the Treasury Department.

FSA has significantly expanded the list of commodities eligible for FSFL. Eligible commodities now include aquaculture; floriculture; fruits (including nuts) and vegetables; corn, grain sorghum, rice, oilseeds, oats, wheat, triticale, spelt, buckwheat, lentils, chickpeas, dry peas, sugar, barley, rye, hay, honey, hops, maple sap, unprocessed meat and poultry, eggs, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt and renewable biomass.

Applications for FSFL must be submitted to the FSA county office that maintains the farm's records. The FSFL application must be approved before: purchasing the FSFL equipment, beginning any excavation or site preparation, accepting delivery of FSFL equipment, beginning installation or construction.

To learn more about Farm Storage Facility Loans, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport or contact a local FSA county office. To find your local FSA county office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Policy Updates for Acreage Reporting

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) recently made several policy updates for acreage reporting for cover crops, revising intended use, late-filed provisions, grazing allotments as well as updated the definitions of "idle" and "fallow."

Reporting Cover Crops:

FSA made changes to the types of cover crops. Cover crop types can be chosen from the following four categories:

- **Cereals and other grasses** - Any cover crop that is classified as a grass plant or cereal grain, and would include, but not be limited to, the following cover crops: cereal rye, wheat, barley, oats, black oats, triticale, annual ryegrass, pearl millet, foxtail millet (also called German, Italian or Hungarian millet), sorghum sudan grass, sorghum and other millets and grasses.
- **Legumes** - Any cover crop that is classified as a legume, including, but not limited to, clovers, vetches, peas, sun hemp, cowpeas, lentils and other legumes.
- **Brassicacae and other broadleaves** - Any cover crop that is classified as a non-legume broadleaf, including, but not limited to, Brassicacae such as radishes, turnips, canola, rapeseed, oilseed rape, and mustards, as well as other broadleaf plants such as phacelia, flax, sunflower, buckwheat, and safflower.
- **Mixtures** - Mixes of two or more cover crop species planted at the same time, for example, oats and radishes. If the cover crop is harvested for any use other than forage or grazing and is not terminated according to policy guidelines, then that crop will no longer be considered a cover crop and the acreage report must be revised to reflect the actual crop.

Permitted Revision of Intended use After Acreage Reporting Date:

New operators or owners who pick up a farm after the acreage reporting deadline has passed and the crop has already been reported on the farm, have 30 days to change the intended use. Producer share interest changes alone will not allow for revisions to intended use after the acreage reporting date. The revision must be performed by either the acreage reporting date or within 30 calendar days from the date when the new operator or owner acquired the lease on land, control of the land or ownership and new producer crop share interest in the previously reported crop acreage. Under this policy, appropriate documentation must be provided to the County Committee's satisfaction to determine that a legitimate operator or ownership and producer crop share interest change occurred to permit the revision.

Acreage Reports:

In order to maintain program eligibility and benefits, producers must timely file acreage reports. Failure to file an acreage report by the crop acreage reporting deadline may result in ineligibility for future program benefits. FSA will not accept acreage reports provided more than a year after the acreage reporting deadline.

Organic Certification Cost Share Program

The Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP) provides cost share assistance to producers and handlers of agricultural products who are obtaining or renewing their certification under the National Organic Program (NOP). Certified operations may receive up to 75 percent of their certification costs paid from Oct. 1, 2016, through Sept. 30, 2017, not to exceed \$750 per certification scope.

Eligible costs include application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement/arrangement requirements, travel/per diem for inspectors, user fees, sales assessments and postage.

Ineligible costs include equipment, materials, supplies, transitional certification fees, late fees and inspections necessary to address National Organic Program regulatory violations.

Producers and handlers may submit OCCSP applications to FSA county offices or they may apply through participating State Agencies, which will be listed at <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/occsp/index> as their agreements to administer the program are finalized.

The FSA OCCSP application form is available at [USDA's eForms site](#), by selecting "Browse forms" and entering "OCCSP" in the "title or keywords" field on the search page.

To learn more about organic certification cost share, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/organic or contact a local FSA office by visiting <http://offices.usda.gov>.

USDA Announces Streamlined Guaranteed Loans and Additional Lender Category for Small-Scale Operators

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the availability of a streamlined version of USDA guaranteed loans, which are tailored for smaller scale farms and urban producers. The program, called EZ Guarantee Loans, uses a simplified application process to help beginning, small, underserved and family farmers and ranchers apply for loans of up to \$100,000 from USDA-approved lenders to purchase farmland or finance agricultural operations.

A new category of lenders will join traditional lenders, such as banks and credit unions, in offering USDA EZ Guarantee Loans. Microlenders, which include Community Development Financial Institutions and Rural Rehabilitation Corporations, will be able to offer their customers up to \$50,000 of EZ Guaranteed Loans, helping to reach urban areas and underserved producers. Banks, credit unions and other traditional USDA-approved lenders, can offer customers up to \$100,000 to help with agricultural operation costs.

EZ Guarantee Loans offer low interest rates and terms up to seven years for financing operating expenses and 40 years for financing the purchase of farm real estate. USDA-approved lenders can issue these loans with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) guaranteeing the loan up to 95 percent.

More information about the available types of FSA farm loans can be found at www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans or by contacting your local FSA office.

Definitions of Terms

FSA defines “idle” as cropland or a balance of cropland within a Common Land Unit (CLU) (field/subfield) which is not planted or considered not planted and does not meet the definition of fallow or skip row. For example, the balance of a field that could not be planted due to moisture or a turn area that is not planted would be reported as idle.

Fallow is considered unplanted cropland acres which are part of a crop/fallow rotation where cultivated land that is normally planted is purposely kept out of production during a regular growing season. Resting the ground in this manner allows it to recover its fertility and conserve moisture for crop production in the next growing season.

Adjusted Gross Income Requirements

The average adjusted gross income (AGI) limitation for commodity and disaster programs under the 2014 Farm Bill was changed to a \$900,000 limitation from all income sources. A person or legal entity, other than a joint venture or general partnership, is eligible to receive, directly or indirectly, certain program payments or benefits if the average adjusted gross income of the person or legal entity falls below the \$900,000 threshold for the three taxable years preceding the most immediately preceding complete taxable year.

MAL and LDP Policy

The Agricultural Act of 2014 authorized 2014-2018 crop year Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL's) and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP's), with a few minor policy changes.

MAL's provide financing and marketing assistance for 2016 crop wheat, feed grains, soybeans and other oilseeds, pulse crops, wool and honey. MAL's 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 MAL, but agrees to forgo the loan, may obtain an LDP if such a payment is available.

Among the changes, farm-stored MAL collateral transferred to warehouse storage will retain the original loan rate, be allowed to transfer only the outstanding farm-stored quantity with no additional quantity allowed and will no longer require producers to have a paid for measurement service when moving or commingling loan collateral.

FSA is now accepting requests for 2016 MAL's and LDP's for all eligible commodities after harvest. Requests for loans and LDP's shall be made on or before the final availability date for the respective commodities. **Wednesday, May 31, 2017, is the final loan availability date for 2016 Corn, Grain Sorghum, and Soybean crops.**

To be eligible for an MAL or an LDP, producers must have beneficial interest in the commodity, in addition to other requirements. A producer retains beneficial interest when control of and title to the crop is maintained.

Before MAL repayments with a market loan gain or LDP disbursements can be made, producers must meet the requirements of actively engaged in farming, cash rent tenant and member contribution.

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 (MLG's) and LDP's. These payment limitations do not apply to MAL loan disbursements or redemptions using commodity certificate exchange.

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. Producers must have a valid CCC-941 on file to earn a market gain of LDP. The AGI does not apply to MAL's redeemed with commodity certificate exchange.

For more information and additional eligibility requirements, please visit a nearby USDA Service Center or FSA's website www.fsa.usda.gov.

2017 Acreage Reporting Dates

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

Acreage reporting dates vary by crop and by county so please contact your local FSA office for a list of county-specific deadlines.

The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the applicable 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 applicable 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 applicable dates or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

2017 Acreage Reporting Dates in Illinois are:

June 15, 2017	cucumbers (planted 5/1 – 5/31)
July 15, 2017	All other spring and summer planted crops (corn, soybeans, pumpkins, sweet corn, etc.)
August 15, 2017	cabbage (planted 6/1 – 7/20)
September 15, 2017	cucumbers (planted 6/1 – 8/15)

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

Breaking New Ground

Agricultural producers are reminded to consult with FSA and NRCS before breaking out new ground for production purposes as doing so without prior authorization may put a producer's federal farm program benefits in jeopardy. This is especially true for land that must meet Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions.

Producers with HEL determined soils are required to apply tillage, crop residue and rotational requirements as specified in their conservation plan.

Producers should notify FSA as a first point of contact prior to conducting land clearing or drainage type projects to ensure the proposed actions meet compliance criteria such as clearing any trees to create new cropland, then these areas will need to be reviewed to ensure such work will not risk your eligibility for benefits.

Landowners and operators complete the form AD-1026 - Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification to identify the proposed action and allow FSA to determine whether a referral to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for further review is necessary.

Maintaining the Quality of Farm-Stored Loan 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.

Power of Attorney

For those who find it difficult to visit the county office personally because of work schedules, distance, health, etc., FSA has a power of attorney form available that enables you to designate another person to conduct your business at the office.

If you are interested, please contact our office or any Farm Service Agency office near you for more information. Power of Attorney provisions do not apply to farm loan programs.

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.**

Changing Bank Accounts

All FSA payments should be electronically transferred into your bank account. In order to make timely payments, you need to notify the office if you close your account or if your bank is purchased by another financial institution. Payments can be delayed if we are not aware of changes to account and routing numbers.

May Interest Rates and Important Dates to Remember

Selected Interest Rates for May 2017	
Farm Operating Loans — Direct	3.00%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct	4.00%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.50%
Emergency Loans	3.750%
Farm Storage Facility Loans (3 years)	1.500%
Farm Storage Facility Loans	1.875%
Farm Storage Facility Loans (7 years)	2.125%
Farm Storage Facility Loans (10 years)	2.375%
Farm Storage Facility Loans (12 years)	2.375%
Commodity Loans 1996- Present	2.00%

Dates to Remember	
NOW	2017 ARC/PLC enrollment continues until August 1, 2017
NOW	Primary Nesting Season (began April 15) mowing prohibited-No management activities allowed, do NOT disturb CRP acres until August 2
\$300,000	Maximum loan amount for both direct farm ownership and operating loans – no down payment required
May 29	Memorial Day Holiday – FSA Offices closed
May 31	Final Date to Apply for Marketing Assistance Loan for 2016 fall harvested crops
Continuous	Farm Facility Loans
Continuous	CRP applications (waterways, filter strips, field border pollinator habitats)
Continuous	Farm Record Changes

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. 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).