

July 2017



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

# NEWSLETTER

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## Louisiana FSA Newsletter

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### Louisiana Farm Service Agency **Upcoming Deadlines and Important Dates**

3737 Government Street  
Alexandria, LA  
71302 [www.fsa.usda.gov/la](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/la)

**Acting State Executive Director:**

T. Christine Normand

**Next State Committee Meeting:**

To be determined

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

To find contact information for your local office go to [www.fsa.usda.gov/la](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/la)

- June 15 – Aug. 1 - County Committee election nomination process period. Ask your local FSA staff for a nomination form
- July 15 - Acreage reporting deadline for most spring-seeded crops
- **Aug. 1 – final day to enroll 2017 ARC/PLC contracts**
- Aug. 1 - final date to request a reconstitution-combining or dividing farms or tracts of land based on farming operation
- Sept. 1 - Enrollment begins for Margin Protection Program (MPP-Dairy) for 2018 coverage

Louisiana FSA now offers SMS texting; receive text message alerts on your cell phone regarding important deadlines, reporting requirements and updates. Contact your local FSA Office for more information.

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# State Unveils Farm Recovery Grant Program

## Damage Caused by March and August 2016 Floods

Farmers and ranchers in 51 Louisiana parishes could be eligible for recovery grant money as a result of the flood events in March and August of 2016.

Informational meetings will be held across the state to assist producers with the application process. Agricultural producers must meet certain requirements for eligibility.

The informational meetings scheduled at this time are:

### July 13, 2017

- **9 a.m. – Welsh Community Center**  
101 Palmer Street  
Welsh LA 70591
- **1 p.m. – LDAF Crowley Office**  
110 S. Western Avenue  
Crowley, LA 70526
- **4 p.m. – Opelousas Civic Center**  
1638 Creswell Lane Extension, Suite 2  
Opelousas, LA 70570

### July 14, 2017

- **10 a.m. – LDAF Hammond Office**  
47076 N. Morrison Blvd  
Hammond, LA 70401

Meetings in North Louisiana are in the process of being scheduled.

This \$10 million grant is funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (as Community Development Block Disaster Recovery Program {CDBG} grant funds). The Office of Community Development, Disaster Recovery Unit, receives the CDBG disaster recovery grant funds from HUD. The Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry will then administer the program. The funding is part of the \$1.6 billion congressional appropriation for Restore Louisiana.

Producers with pre-storm annual gross farm revenue of \$25,000 in the years 2014, 2015 or 2016 are eligible to apply.

Crop loss must amount to a minimum of \$10,000 as calculated by the crop loss calculator. Eligible crops include: cotton, corn, crawfish, grain sorghum, rice, hay, soybeans, sweet potatoes, sugarcane, strawberries, wheat and cattle.

Eligible parishes include: Acadia, Allen, Ascension, Avoyelles, Beauregard, Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Calcasieu, Caldwell, Catahoula, Claiborne, DeSoto, East Baton Rouge, East Carroll, East Feliciana, Evangeline, Franklin, Grant, Iberia, Iberville, Jackson, Jefferson Davis, Lafayette, LaSalle, Lincoln, Livingston, Madison, Morehouse, Natchitoches, Ouachita, Pointe Coupee, Rapides, Red River, Richland, Sabine, St. Helena, St. James, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Union, Vermilion, Vernon, Washington, Webster, West Baton Rouge, West Carroll, West Feliciana and Winn.

Questions about the program are to be directed to the LAFA main line (225-922-1277) or the toll free number (1-866-295-0081).

To review the guidelines, go to <http://www.ldaf.state.la.us/>. Applications will be available online July 26, 2017.

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## Eligibility for Nominations for the 2017 County Committee Elections

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) County Committees are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA and allow grassroots input and local administration of federal farm programs.

Committees are comprised of locally elected agricultural producers responsible for the fair and equitable administration of FSA farm programs in their counties. Committee members are accountable to the Secretary of Agriculture. If elected, members become part of a local decision making and farm program delivery process.

A County Committee is composed of three to 11 elected members from local administrative areas (LAA). Each member serves a three-year term. To be eligible for nomination and hold office as a committee member or alternate, a person must fulfill each of the following requirements: (1) be a producer with an interest in farming or ranching operations, (2) participate or cooperate in any FSA program provided for by law, (3) be a U.S. citizen, (4) be of legal voting age, (5) meet the basic eligibility requirements, and (6) reside in the county or multi-county jurisdiction in which they will be serving.

All nomination forms for the 2017 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA Service Center by Aug. 1, 2017. For more information on FSA County Committee elections and appointments, refer to the FSA fact sheet: Eligibility to Vote and Hold Office as a COC Member available online at: [www.fsa.usda.gov/elections](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/elections).

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## Payment Limitations by Program

The 2014 Farm Bill established a maximum dollar amount for each program that can be received annually, directly or indirectly, by each person or legal entity. Payment limitations vary by program for 2014 through 2018.

Below is an overview of payment limitations by program.

### Commodity and Price Support Programs

The annual limitation for the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs) and Market Loan Gains is \$125,000 total.

### Conservation Programs

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) annual rental payment and incentive payment is limited to \$50,000. CRP contracts approved before Oct. 1, 2008, may exceed the limitation, subject to payment limitation rules in effect on the date of contract approval.

The Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) has an annual limit of \$200,000 per disaster event. The Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) has an annual limit of \$500,000 per disaster event.

### Disaster Assistance Programs

The annual limitation of \$125,000 applies to the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees

and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP), Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) and Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP). The total payments received under ELAP, LFP and LIP may not exceed \$125,000. A separate limitation of \$125,000 applies to Tree Assistance Program (TAP) payments. There is also a separate \$125,000 payment limit for the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP).

Payment limitations also apply to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs. Contact your local NRCS office more information.

For more information on FSA payment limitations by program, visit

[https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdafiles/FactSheets/2015/payment\\_eligibility\\_payment\\_limitations.pdf](https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdafiles/FactSheets/2015/payment_eligibility_payment_limitations.pdf).

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## 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.
- **Brassicas and other broadleaves** - Any cover crop that is classified as a non-legume broadleaf, including, but not limited to, Brassicas 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.

## **Reporting Grazing Allotments:**

FSA offices can now accept acreage reports for grazing allotments. Producers will use Form "FSA-578" to report grazing allotments as animal unit months (AUMs) using the "Reporting Unit" field. The local FSA office will need the grazing period start and end date and the percent of public land.

## **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.

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## **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](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>.

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# County Committee Members Discussion

The National Outreach team will be hosting a discussion on COC. There will be 2 COC members on the webinar to talk about their experience. The webinar will take place on Thursday, July 13, 2017 at 12:00 p.m. CST and should last one hour.

Streaming audio is available through your computer; click on <https://cc.readytalk.com/r/jdbgdyyvrmrt6&eom>

Or you can call in to listen to the audio via your phone: U.S. Toll: 303-248-0285; access code: 7205000

Listen in as County Committee members talk about the importance and benefits of serving on a FSA County Committee. This webinar is open to the public, the audience will be in listen-only mode but questions can be submitted via the chat feature in Ready Talk.

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## Loan Servicing

There are options for Farm Service Agency loan customers during financial stress. If you are a borrower who is unable to make payments on a loan, contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager to learn about the options available to you.

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## Disaster Set-Aside (DSA) Program

FSA borrowers with farms located in designated primary or contiguous disaster areas who are unable to make their scheduled FSA loan payments should consider the Disaster Set-Aside (DSA) program.

DSA is available to producers who suffered losses as a result of a natural disaster and is intended to relieve immediate and temporary financial stress. FSA is authorized to consider setting aside the portion of a payment/s needed for the operation to continue on a viable scale.

Borrowers must have at least two years left on the term of their loan in order to qualify.

Borrowers have eight months from the date of the disaster designation to submit a complete application. The application must include a written request for DSA signed by all parties liable for the debt along with production records and financial history for the operating year in which the disaster occurred. FSA may request additional information from the borrower in order to determine eligibility.

All farm loans must be current or less than 90 days past due at the time the DSA application is complete. Borrowers may not set aside more than one installment on each loan.

The amount set-aside, including interest accrued on the principal portion of the set-aside, is due on or before the final due date of the loan.

For more information, contact your local FSA farm loan office.

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## Selected Interest Rates for July 2017

- Farm Operating Loans — Direct 2.875%
- Farm Ownership Loans — Direct 3.875%
- 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 (5 years) — 1.750%
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (7 years) — 2.000%
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (10 years) — 2.250%
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (12 years) — 2.250%
- Sugar Storage Facility Loans (15 year term) — 2.375%
- Commodity Loans — 2.125%

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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).