

December 2018



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

# NEWSLETTER

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## Louisiana FSA Newsletter

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**Louisiana Farm Service Agency**

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Alexandria, LA 71302

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

**State Executive Director:**  
Craig A. McCain

**State Committee:**  
Ray Young, Chairperson  
John Earles  
Emery Jones

### **Message from Craig A. McCain, FSA State Executive Director**

“You shall know them by their fruits.” is a phrase used through the ages to describe how we might recognize the character of a person. Most of the communication issued from this Agency is, as it should be; focused on loans, program benefits and assistance available to agricultural producers across the State. However, during this season, it seems appropriate to speak about the people involved in this great industry. Ag producers are known generally to be an optimistic, hard-working, committed lot. A lifetime spent in agricultural work has proven this to be a very accurate description. However, farmers and ranchers are also generally a warm, kind and generous group! These characteristics are demonstrated each time you face the most challenging of times, whether it be in the form of a natural disaster or difficult economic times. Whatever the case, the character and goodwill born in your heart is demonstrated

Julie Richard  
Donna Winters

in our communities, time and time again! The food and fiber that you produce, is not only valuable, but essential to sustaining human life. What a gift!

#### **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)

During this Season, the Farm Service Agency would like to recognize and thank you for the fruit which you have brought forth! If we are known by our fruits, "You" are well known! Thank you for the fruit of your hands and the fruit of your hearts! The Louisiana Farm Service Agency is proud to be a part of this great industry and we are very happy to serve you. We wish you a Happy and Prosperous New Year!

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## Upcoming Important Dates

- **Dec. 24 & 25** - USDA Service Centers will be closed for the Christmas holiday
- **Jan. 1** - USDA Service Centers will be closed for the New Year's Day holiday
- **Jan. 15** - Market Facilitation Program (MFP) signup period ends

**Louisiana FSA now offers SMS texting; receive text message alerts on your cell phone regarding important deadlines, reporting requirements and updates.**

Whether you are in the field, on a tractor or even on horseback, this service enables FSA customers and stakeholders to receive notifications while on the go.

Contact your local FSA Office for more information.

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## Get Access to the Farmers.gov Dashboard

The vision of farmers.gov is to provide farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners with online self-service applications, educational materials, engagement opportunities, and business tools.

Many of these self-service features are available through the secure [farmers.gov portal](#), where you can log in to your dashboard to apply for programs, process transactions, and manage accounts.

If you work with USDA, we encourage you to get an USDA eAuthentication account, providing you access to the farmers.gov dashboard and enabling you to better manage your USDA business online.

### **Sign Up Today**

We encourage you to register for a Level 2 eAuthentication account:

1. Contact your [local service center](#) to ensure your correct email address is on file.
2. Create an account at [www.eauth.usda.gov](http://www.eauth.usda.gov). When creating your account, be sure to request Level 2 access and use the email address on file.

3. Complete identity verification by either using the online self-service identity verification method or by completing the identity verification in-person at your USDA service center.
4. Now that you're now enrolled, contact your local USDA service center to have your account linked with your USDA customer record.
5. You're ready to login!

Currently, only customers doing business as individuals can access their records using a USDA eAuthentication account. Access for customers doing business as an entity (such as an LLC or Trust) or on behalf of another individual will be available in the future.

### Available Dashboard Features

USDA is building farmers.gov *for farmers, by farmers*, based on feedback from you and our field employees who serve you. Once you're logged in to the secure farmers.gov portal, you can view a dashboard personalized with your customer profile and complete the following activities:

- View and track your application for the [2017 Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program](#); and
- Apply for the [Market Facilitation Program](#).

You can also link directly to our existing business applications, such as Farm Service Agency's [FSAfarm+](#) and Natural Resources Conservation Service's [Conservation Client Gateway](#). As we grow, these and other USDA business applications will be integrated into the dashboard.

### Other Upcoming Features

In the next year, USDA plans to add new features to the dashboard, enabling you to:

- view information on current and previous farm loans;
- evaluate loan programs to find the best fit for your business goals;
- submit loan documents to your service center; and
- view your farm records, including your farm and tract number and maps.

### Need Help?

For help setting up your account, call our help desk at 1-800-457-3642. For other questions, we encourage you to reach out your [local USDA service center](#).

To read the full blog, visit <https://www.farmers.gov/media/blog/2018/12/19/get-access-your-farmersgov-dashboard>.

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## USDA Launches Second Round of Trade Mitigation Payments

USDA launched the second and final round of trade mitigation payments aimed at assisting farmers suffering from damage due to unjustified trade retaliation by foreign nations. Producers of certain commodities will now be eligible to receive Market Facilitation Program (MFP) payments for the second half of their 2018 production.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has been administering MFP to provide the first payments to producers since Sept. 2018 for the first 50 percent of their 2018 production. MFP provides

payments to almond, cotton, corn, dairy, hog, sorghum, soybean, fresh sweet cherry, and wheat producers.

Producers need only sign-up once for the MFP to be eligible for the first and second payments. The MFP sign-up period runs through Jan. 15, 2019, with information and instructions provided at [www.farmers.gov/mfp](http://www.farmers.gov/mfp). Producers must complete an application by Jan. 15, 2019, but have until May 1, 2019, to certify their 2018 production.

Eligible producers should apply after harvest is complete, as payments will only be issued once production is reported.

For farmers who have already applied, completed harvest, and certified their 2018 production, a second payment will be issued on the remaining 50 percent of the producer's total production, multiplied by the MFP rate for the specific commodity.

### **Market Facilitation Program**

Commodity	First and Second Payment Rate	Est. Total Payment** (in \$1,000s)
Almonds (shelled)	\$0.03 / lb.	\$63,300
Cotton	\$0.06 / lb.	\$553,800
Corn	\$0.01 / bu.	\$192,000
Dairy (milk)	\$0.12 / cwt.	\$254,800
Pork (hogs)	\$8.00 / head	\$580,600
Soybeans	\$1.65 / bu.	\$7,259,400
Sorghum	\$0.86 / bu.	\$313,600
Sweet Cherries (fresh)	\$0.16 / lb.	\$111,500
Wheat	\$0.14 / bu.	\$238,400
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$9,567,400</b>

\*\* Total payment rate on 100% of production

MFP payments are limited to a combined \$125,000 for corn, cotton, sorghum, soybeans, and wheat capped per person or legal entity. MFP payments are also limited to a combined \$125,000 for dairy and hog producers, and a combined \$125,000 for fresh sweet cherry and almond producers. Applicants must also have an average adjusted gross income for tax years 2014, 2015, and 2016 of less than \$900,000. Applicants must also comply with the provisions of the Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation regulations.

For detailed information, read the full [USDA press release](#).

For more further information or to locate and contact local FSA offices, interested producers can visit [www.farmers.gov](http://www.farmers.gov).

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## 2018 Livestock Forage Losses

Producers in Bossier, Caddo, Bienville, Claiborne, Webster, Desoto, Red River, Natchitoches and Lincoln parishes are eligible to apply for 2018 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) benefits on warm season improved pasture and native pasture.

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. Eligible livestock producers must complete a CCC-853 and the required supporting documentation no later than Jan. 30, 2019 for 2018 losses.

Additional Information about LFP, including eligible livestock and fire criteria, is available at your local FSA office or online at: [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

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

**Cover Crop Guidelines**

Recently the Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Risk Management Agency (RMA) worked together to develop consistent, simple and a flexible policy for cover crop practices.

The termination and reporting guidelines were updated for cover crops.

**Termination:**

The cover crop termination guidelines provide the timeline for terminating cover crops, are based on zones and apply to non-irrigated cropland. To view the zones and additional guidelines visit <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/landuse/crops/> and click "Cover Crop Termination Guidelines."

**Reporting:**

The intended use of cover only will be used to report cover crops. This includes crops that were

terminated by tillage and reported with an intended use code of green manure. An FSA policy change will allow cover crops to be hayed and grazed. Program eligibility for the cover crop that is being hayed or grazed will be determined by each specific program.

If the crop reported as cover only is harvested for any use other than forage or grazing and is not terminated properly, then that crop will no longer be considered a cover crop.

Crops reported with an intended use of cover only will not count toward the total cropland on the farm. In these situations a subsequent crop will be reported to account for all cropland on the farm.

Cover crops include grasses, legumes, and forbs, for seasonal cover and other conservation purposes. Cover crops are primarily used for erosion control, soil health improvement, and water quality improvement. The cover crop may be terminated by natural causes, such as frost, or intentionally terminated through chemical application, crimping, rolling, tillage or cutting. A cover crop managed and terminated according to NRCS Cover Crop Termination Guidelines is **not** considered a crop for crop insurance purposes.

Cover crops can be planted: with no subsequent crop planted, before a subsequent crop, after prevented planting acreage, after a planted crop, or into a standing crop.

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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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## USDA Offers Targeted Farm Loan Funding for Underserved Groups and Beginning Farmers

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds producers that FSA offers targeted farm ownership and farm operating loans to assist underserved applicants as well as beginning farmers and ranchers.

USDA defines underserved applicants as a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of the group without regard to their individual qualities. For farm loan program purposes, targeted underserved groups are women, African Americans, American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Hispanics and Asians and Pacific Islanders.

Underserved or beginning farmers and ranchers who cannot obtain commercial credit from a bank can apply for either FSA direct loans or guaranteed loans. Direct loans are made to applicants by FSA. Guaranteed loans are made by lending institutions who arrange for FSA to guarantee the loan. FSA can guarantee up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan. The FSA guarantee allows lenders to make agricultural credit available to producers who do not meet the lender's normal underwriting criteria.

The direct and guaranteed loan program provides for two types of loans: farm ownership loans and farm operating loans. In addition to customary farm operating and ownership loans, FSA now offers Microloans through the direct loan program. The focus of Microloans is on the financing needs of small, beginning farmer, niche and non-traditional farm operations. Microloans are available for both ownership and operating finance needs. To learn more about microloans, visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans).

To qualify as a beginning producer, the individual or entity must meet the eligibility requirements outlined for direct or guaranteed loans. Additionally, individuals and all entity members must have operated a farm for less than 10 years. Applicants must materially or substantially participate in the operation.

For more information on FSA's farm loan programs and targeted underserved and beginning farmer guidelines, visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans).

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## Environmental Review Required Before Project Implementation

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires Federal agencies to consider all potential environmental impacts for federally-funded projects before the project is approved.

For all Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs, an environmental review must be completed before actions are approved, such as site preparation or ground disturbance. These programs include, **but are not limited to**, the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program and farm loans. If project implementation begins before FSA has completed an environmental review, this will result in a denial of the request. There are exceptions regarding the Stafford Act and emergencies. It is important to wait until you receive written approval of your project proposal before starting any actions, including, but not limited to, vegetation clearing, site preparation or ground disturbance.

Remember to contact your local FSA office early in your planning process to determine what level of environmental review is required for your program application so that it can be completed timely.

Applications cannot be approved contingent upon the completion of an environmental review. FSA must have copies of all permits and plans before an application can be approved.

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## Payment Limitations 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.

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## Selected Interest Rates for December 2018

- Farm Operating Loans — Direct 4.000%
- Farm Ownership Loans — Direct 4.250%
- Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher — 1.50%
- Emergency Loans — 3.750%
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (3 years) — 2.875%
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (5 years) — 3.000%
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (7 years) — 3.125%
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (10 years) — 3.125%
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (12 years) — 3.125%
- Sugar Storage Facility Loans (15 year term) — 3.250%
- Commodity Loans — 3.750%

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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).