

October 2020



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Louisiana FSA Newsletter

Louisiana Farm Service Agency

3737 Government Street
Alexandria, LA 71302

State Executive Director:
Craig A. McCain

State Committee:
Ray Young, Chairperson
John Earles

Message from Craig A. McCain, FSA State Executive Director

Harvest is underway in Louisiana and we hope this year brings favorable harvest conditions and high yields.

Farmers, we invite you to share your harvest progress by sending an email to sharingoursuccesses@usda.gov with landscape-orientation photos or videos under 10 seconds, a short description

Kristy Jones
Julie Richard
Donna Winters

of your photo or video, your city and state, and your Twitter handle (if you have one).

Next State Committee Meeting:

To be determined

In addition to harvest photos, you can send photos and videos of preparing for harvest as well as those that show any challenges along the way. This will be a way for you to show other farmers as well as Americans in general all of the hard work that goes into harvest on your farm.

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

You can follow along by checking back in periodically to see new harvest photos and videos. To view the #Harvest2020 progress, visit <https://arcg.is/1j9fqb0>.

To find contact information for your local office go to www.fsa.usda.gov/la

Do Right and Feed Everyone!

Upcoming Important Dates

- **Sept. 14 - Dec. 14** Seafood Trade Relief Program signup period
- **Sept. 21 - Dec. 11** CFAP2 signup period
- **Oct. 13 - Dec. 11** 2021 DMC program enrollment period
- **Oct. 13 - March 15, 2021** election and enrollment period for ARC/PLC for 2021
- **Oct. 30** WHIP+ signup ends
- **Nov. 2** County Committee election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters
- **Nov. 11** USDA Service Centers will be closed in observance of the Veteran's Day holiday

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.

More information on the CFAP process is available on farmers.gov/cfap or call 877-508-8364.

New to Farming Because of the Pandemic? USDA Can Help

Are you new to farming because of the pandemic? USDA can help you get started – everything from helping you register your farm to getting financial assistance and advice. Our team members, based at USDA Service Centers across the country, are hearing from people who are interested in more space and working the land, and we want to let you know we can help.

Get Started with USDA

First, you want to make sure your farm is registered. If you purchased land, it might already be established with USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) with a farm number on file. If not, FSA can help you register your farm.

To obtain a farm number, you'll bring an official tax ID (Social Security number or an employer ID) and a property deed. If you do not own the land, bring a lease agreement to show you have control of the property to your FSA representative. If your operation is incorporated or an entity, you may

also need to provide proof that you have signature authority and the legal ability to enter contracts with USDA.

Access to Capital

USDA can provide access to capital through its farm loans, which is a great resource when producers aren't able to get a loan from a traditional lender. Loans can help with purchasing land or equipment or with operating costs, and FSA even offers microloans, which are especially popular among producers with smaller farms. For more information, [check out our Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#).

Conservation Practices

We can help you make conservation improvements to your farm, which are good for your bottom line and your operation. We'll help you develop a conservation plan as well as apply for financial assistance that'll cover the bulk of the costs for implementing. To learn more about some of the conservation practices that we help producers with, [check out our Conservation at Work Video Series](#).

If you purchase land, and you don't want to farm all of it, you can look at either a conservation easement or managing for native shrubs and grasses through either the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program or Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Easements are long-term, while a CRP contract is 10-15 years. These are good options for lands with land that is not optimal for production or sensitive lands like wetlands and grasslands.

Additional Resources

Depending on your farm, you may want to look at crop insurance. The USDA's Risk Management Agency provides crop insurance to help you manage risks on your farm. There are [many types of insurance products available](#) for a wide variety of production practices, including organic and sustainable agriculture.

Your local communities also have great resources for farmers including conservation districts, Rural Development, cooperative extensions, and different farming groups. To get started with USDA, contact your local USDA service center.

Submit Loan Requests for Financing Early

Farm Loan teams throughout Louisiana are already working on operating loans for spring 2020 so it is important that potential borrowers submit their requests early so they can be timely processed. The farm loan team can help determine which loan programs are best for applicants.

FSA offers a wide range of low-interest loans that can meet the financial needs of any farm operation for just about any purpose. The traditional **farm operating and farm ownership loans** can help large and small farm operations take advantage of early purchasing discounts for spring inputs as well expenses throughout the year.

Microloans are a simplified loan program that will provide up to \$50,000 for both Farm Ownership and Operating Microloans to eligible applicants. These loans, targeted for smaller operations and non-traditional operations, can be used for operating expenses, starting a new agricultural enterprise, purchasing equipment, and other needs associated with a farming operation. Staff at your local FSA office can provide more details on farm operating and microloans and provide loan applications. Loans to beginning farmers and members of underserved groups are a priority.

Other types of loans available include:

Marketing Assistance Loans allow producers to use eligible commodities as loan collateral and obtain a 9-month loan while the crop is in storage. These loans provide cash flow to the producer and allow them to market the crop when prices may be more advantageous.

Farm Storage Facility Loans can be used to build permanent structures used to store eligible commodities, or for storage and handling trucks, or portable or permanent handling equipment. A variety of structures are eligible under this loan, including bunker silos, grain bins, hay storage structures and refrigerated structures for vegetables and fruit. A producer may borrow up to \$500,000 per loan.

Please call your local FSA office if you have questions about any of the loans available through FSA.

Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2

Signup for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2 (CFAP 2) began on Sept. 21, 2020 and will continue through Dec. 11, 2020. CFAP 2 provides eligible producers with direct financial assistance due to market disruptions and associated costs because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Check out our [brief video](#) about the program.

CFAP 2 is a separate program from the first round of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, now referred to as CFAP 1. Farmers and ranchers who participated in CFAP 1 will not be automatically enrolled and must complete a new application for CFAP 2. Details on how to apply can be found on farmers.gov/cfap/apply.

CFAP 2 Eligible Commodities Finder

Many more commodities are eligible for CFAP 2 than CFAP 1. Interested in finding the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2 payment rates for the eligible commodities you grow or raise? Our new, easy-to-use [CFAP 2 Eligible Commodities Finder](#) makes finding payment rates specific to your operation simple. From yam to alpaca farmers – and everyone in between – the payment rate information you need is just a few clicks away. Try it today on your desktop, tablet, or mobile device.

Call Center

A call center is available for producers who would like additional one-on-one support with the CFAP 2 application process. Please call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance. The call center can provide service to non-English speaking customers. Customers will select 1 for English and 2 to speak with a Spanish speaking employee. For other languages, customers select 1 and indicate their language to the call center staff.

USDA Issues CRP Payments

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is issuing \$1.68 billion in payments to agricultural producers and landowners for the 21.9 million acres enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), which provides annual rental payments for land devoted to conservation purposes.

Through CRP, farmers and ranchers establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees, to control soil erosion, improve water quality, and enhance wildlife

habitat on cropland. Farmers and ranchers who participate in CRP help provide numerous benefits to the nation's environment and economy.

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest private-lands conservation programs in the United States. It was originally intended to primarily control soil erosion and potentially stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production. The program has evolved over the years, providing many conservation and economic benefits. The program marks its 35-year anniversary this December. Program successes include:

- Preventing more than 9 billion tons of soil from eroding, which is enough soil to fill 600 million dump trucks;
- Reducing nitrogen and phosphorous runoff relative to annually tilled cropland by 95 and 85 percent, respectively;
- Sequestering an annual average of 49 million tons of greenhouse gases, equal to taking 9 million cars off the road;
- Creating more than 3 million acres of restored wetlands while protecting more than 175,000 stream miles with riparian forest and grass buffers, which is enough to go around the world seven times; and
- Benefiting bees and other pollinators and increasing populations of ducks, pheasants, turkey, bobwhite quail, prairie chickens, grasshopper sparrows, and many other birds.

The successes of CRP contribute to USDA's [Agriculture Innovation Agenda](#) and its goal of reducing the environmental footprint of U.S. agriculture by half by 2050. Earlier this year, Secretary Perdue announced the department-wide initiative to align resources, programs, and research to position American agriculture to better meet future global demands.

CRP participants with contracts effective beginning on October 1, 2020, will receive their first annual rental payment in October 2021.

For more information on CRP, visit fsa.usda.gov or contact your [local FSA county office](#).

Enrollment Begins for Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs for 2021

Agricultural producers can now make elections and enroll in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for the 2021 crop year. The signup period opened Tuesday, Oct. 13. These key U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) safety-net programs help producers weather fluctuations in either revenue or price for certain crops, and more than \$5 billion in payments are in the process of going out to producers who signed up for the 2019 crop year.

Enrollment for the 2021 crop year closes March 15, 2021.

ARC provides income support payments on historical base acres when actual crop revenue declines below a specified guaranteed level. PLC provides income support payments on historical base acres when the effective price for a covered commodity falls below its reference price.

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 and short grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

2021 Elections and Enrollment

Producers can elect coverage and enroll in crop-by-crop ARC-County or PLC, or ARC-Individual for the entire farm, for the 2021 crop year. Although election changes for 2021 are optional, enrollment (signed contract) is required for each year of the program. If a producer has a multi-year contract on the farm and makes an election change for 2021, it will be necessary to sign a new contract.

If an election is not submitted by the deadline of March 15, 2021, the election defaults to the current election for crops on the farm from the prior crop year.

For crop years 2022 and 2023, producers will have an opportunity to make new elections during those signups. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the farm.

2019 Crop Year ARC and PLC Payments

FSA began processing payments last week for 2019 ARC-County (ARC-CO) and PLC on covered commodities that met payment triggers on farms enrolled for the 2019 crop year. In addition to the \$5 billion now in process, FSA anticipates it will issue additional payments by the end of November for 2019 commodities covered under ARC-Individual (ARC-IC) and additional commodities that trigger PLC and ARC-CO payments for which rates have not yet been published

Producers who had 2019 covered commodities enrolled in ARC-CO can visit the [ARC and PLC webpage](#) for payment rates applicable to their county and each covered commodity. For farms and covered commodities enrolled in 2019 PLC, the following crops met payment triggers: barley, canola, chickpeas (small and large), corn, dry peas, grain sorghum, lentils, peanuts, seed cotton and wheat.

Oats and soybeans did not meet 2019 PLC payment triggers.

2019 PLC payment rates for the following covered commodities have not been determined: crambe, flaxseed, long and medium grain rice, mustard seed, rapeseed, safflower, sesame seed, sunflower seed and temperate Japonica rice. Payment rates for these commodities will be announced at a later date.

Web-Based Decision Tools

In partnership with USDA, the University of Illinois and Texas A&M University offer web-based decision tools to assist producers in making informed, educated decisions using crop data specific to their respective farming operations. Tools include:

- [Gardner-farmdoc Payment Calculator](#), the University of Illinois tool that offers farmers the ability to run payment estimate modeling for their farms and counties for ARC-County and PLC.
- [ARC and PLC Decision Tool](#), the Texas A&M tool allows producers to analyze payment yield updates and expected payments for 2021. Producers who have used the tool in the past should see their username and much of their farm data already available in the system.

More Information

For more information on ARC and PLC, including two online decision tools that assist producers in making enrollment and election decisions specific to their operations, visit the [ARC and PLC webpage](#).

For additional questions and assistance, contact your local USDA service center. To locate your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-locator.

USDA Announces Oct. 30 Deadline to Submit Wildfire, Hurricane Disaster Assistance Applications

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced **Friday, Oct. 30, 2020**, as the deadline to submit applications for the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program – Plus (WHIP+) for 2018 and 2019 losses. USDA did not originally specify a deadline when the program was announced.

WHIP+ compensates producers for losses due to hurricanes, floods, snowstorms, tornadoes, typhoons, volcanic activity, drought, excessive moisture, and wildfires occurring in calendar years 2018 and 2019. Drought and excessive moisture were added as eligible losses for the program in March 2020. To date, FSA has received more than 133,000 applications for WHIP+ disaster assistance and paid out nearly \$1.4 billion in WHIP+ benefits.

Next week, FSA will launch a new tool on the [farmers.gov WHIP+ webpage](https://farmers.gov/WHIP+) to help producers understand eligibility for the program and whether they had possible losses in 2018 and 2019. The tool will also allow producers an opportunity to provide information for FSA staff to reach out to them.

FSA will announce soon the details for producers who experienced quality loss from 2018 and 2019 natural disaster events authorized in appropriations legislation. There will be a separate signup period for producers reporting quality loss.

For more information or application assistance, visit [farmers.gov WHIP+ webpage](https://farmers.gov/WHIP+), or contact your local USDA Service Center. To locate your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-center-locator.

Emergency Conservation Program

FSA is accepting ECP applications in Acadia, Allen, Avoyelles, Beauregard, Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Calcasieu, Cameron, Catahoula, DeSoto, Evangeline, Franklin, Grant, Iberia, Jackson, Jeff Davis, Lincoln, Natchitoches, Rapides, Red River, Sabine, St. Landry, Union, Vernon, and Winn parishes. If you've suffered a loss from a natural disaster may contact your local FSA County Office and request assistance from October 7, 2020 to December 7, 2020.

ECP helps you with the cost to restore damaged farmland to pre-disaster conditions. You may receive up to 75 percent of the cost of approved restoration activity. Limited resource, socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers and ranchers may receive up to 90 percent cost-share.

In most cases, you must apply for assistance prior to beginning reconstructive work. FSA's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and environmental compliance review process is required to be completed before any actions are taken. Submitting an application after reconstructive work has been completed may not qualify for ECP. Conservation concerns that were present on the land prior to the disaster are not eligible for ECP assistance.

FSA County Committees will evaluate applications based on information provided and if applicable, an on-site inspection of the damaged land, taking into consideration the type and extent of the damage. Submission of an application does not guarantee that cost-share funding will be provided.

Contact your local FSA office for approved ECP practices.

Emergency Forest Restoration Program

FSA is accepting EFRP applications in Allen, Beauregard, Bienville, Caddo, Calcasieu, Claiborne, Evangeline, Grant, Jackson, LaSalle, Lincoln, Natchitoches, Ouachita, Rapides, Red River, Sabine, Union, Vernon, Webster and Winn parishes. If you've suffered a loss from a natural disaster may contact your local FSA County Office and request assistance from October 7, 2020 to December 7, 2020.

EFRP provides payments to eligible owners of nonindustrial private forest (NIPF) land to enable them to carry out emergency measures to restore land damaged by a natural disaster. After applications are received, local FSA County Committees determine land eligibility using information provided and if applicable, an on-site damage inspection to assess the type and extent of damage.

Eligible forest restoration practices include debris removal, such as down or damaged trees, in order to establish a new stand or provide natural regeneration; site preparation, planting materials and labor to replant forest land; restoration of forestland roads, fire lanes, fuel breaks or erosion control structures; fencing, tree shelters and tree tubes to protect trees from wildlife damage; and wildlife enhancement to provide cover openings and wildlife habitat.

In order to meet eligibility requirements, NIPF land must have existing tree cover or had tree cover immediately before the natural disaster occurred and be sustainable for growing trees. The land must also be owned by any nonindustrial private individual, group, association, corporation or other private legal entity that has definitive decision-making authority over the land. The natural disaster must have resulted in damage that if untreated would impair or endanger the natural resources on the land and/or materially affect future use of the land.

More Information

For more information on disaster recovery, visit farmers.gov/recover, or contact your local USDA Service Center. To locate your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-center-locator.

FSA Outlines MAL and LDP Policy

The 2018 Farm Bill extends loan authority through 2023 for Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs).

MALs and LDPs provide financing and marketing assistance for wheat, feed grains, soybeans, and other oilseeds, pulse crops, rice, peanuts, cotton, wool and honey. MALs provide you with interim financing after harvest to help you meet cash flow needs without having to sell your commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows. A producer who is eligible to obtain a loan, but agrees to forgo the loan, may obtain an LDP if such a payment is available. Marketing loan provisions and LDPs are not available for sugar and extra-long staple cotton.

FSA is now accepting requests for 2020 MALs and LDPs for all eligible commodities after harvest. Requests for loans and LDPs shall be made on or before the final availability date for the respective commodities.

Commodity certificates are available to loan holders who have outstanding nonrecourse loans for wheat, upland cotton, rice, feed grains, pulse crops (dry peas, lentils, large and small chickpeas), peanuts, wool, soybeans and designated minor oilseeds. These certificates can be purchased at the posted county price (or adjusted world price or national posted price) for the quantity of commodity

under loan, and must be immediately exchanged for the collateral, satisfying the loan. MALs redeemed with commodity certificates are not subject to Adjusted Gross Income provisions.

To be considered eligible for an LDP, you must have form [CCC-633EZ, Page 1](#) on file at your local FSA Office before losing beneficial interest in the crop. Pages 2, 3 or 4 of the form must be submitted when payment is requested.

Marketing loan gains (MLGs) and loan deficiency payments (LDPs) are no longer subject to payment limitations, actively engaged in farming and cash-rent tenant rules.

Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) provisions state that if your total applicable three-year average AGI exceeds \$900,000, then you're not eligible to receive an MLG or LDP. You must have a valid CCC-941 on file to earn a market gain of LDP. The AGI does not apply to MALs redeemed with commodity certificate exchange.

For more information and additional eligibility requirements, contact your local USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Implementing Fire Management on CRP Acres

FSA encourages you to be proactive in preventing the spread of wildfire. If you participate in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), you are responsible for fire management on your CRP acreage. The goal is to suppress the amount of fuel in the event of a wildfire while still promoting the diversity of the conservation cover.

One fire management practice includes installing firebreaks, which should be included in the contract support document and installed according to NRCS firebreak standards. Barren firebreaks will only be allowed in high risk areas, such as transportation corridors, rural communities, and adjacent farmsteads. A conservationist must certify that there will not be an erosion hazard from the barren firebreak. If erosion becomes a problem, remedial action will be taken.

You must complete the necessary management activities outside of the Primary Nesting Season. In Louisiana, the Primary Nesting Season is April 15th through July 15th. Remember that Fireguard technical practices should be outlined in your Conservation Plan of Operations (CPO).

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, the request will be denied. Although there are exceptions regarding the Stafford Act and emergencies, it's important to wait until you receive written approval of your project proposal before starting any actions.

Applications cannot be approved until FSA has copies of all permits and plans. 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.

Update Your Records

FSA is cleaning up our producer record database and needs your help. Please report any changes of address, zip code, phone number, email address or an incorrect name or business name on file to our office. You should also report changes in your farm operation, like the addition of a farm by lease or purchase. You should also report any changes to your operation in which you reorganize to form a Trust, LLC or other legal entity.

FSA and NRCS program participants are required to promptly report changes in their farming operation to the County Committee in writing and to update their *Farm Operating Plan* on form CCC-902.

To update your records, contact your local USDA Service Center.

Maintaining Good Credit History

Farm Service Agency (FSA) loans require applicants to have a satisfactory credit history. A credit report is requested for all FSA direct farm loan applicants. These reports are reviewed to verify outstanding debts, see if bills are paid timely and to determine the impact on cash flow.

Information on your credit report is strictly confidential and is used only as an aid in conducting FSA business.

Our farm loan staff will discuss options with you if you have an unfavorable credit report and will provide a copy of your report. If you dispute the accuracy of the information on the credit report, it is up to you to contact the issuing credit report company to resolve any errors or inaccuracies.

There are multiple ways to remedy an unfavorable credit score:

- Make sure to pay bills on time
 - Setting up automatic payments or automated reminders can be an effective way to remember payment due dates.
- Pay down existing debt
- Keep your credit card balances low
- Avoid suddenly opening or closing existing credit accounts

FSA's farm loan staff will guide you through the process, which may require you to reapply for a loan after improving or correcting your credit report.

Making Farm Reconstitutions

When changes in farm ownership or operation take place, a farm *reconstitution* is necessary. The reconstitution — or recon — is the process of combining or dividing farms or tracts of land based on the farming operation.

To be effective for the current Fiscal Year (FY), farm combinations and farm divisions must be requested by **August 1 of the FY** for farms subject to the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program. A reconstitution is considered to be requested when all of the required signatures are on FSA-155 and all other applicable documentation, such as proof of ownership, is submitted.

Total Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and non-ARC/PLC farms may be reconstituted at any time.

The following are the different methods used when doing a farm recon:

- **Estate Method** — the division of bases, allotments and quotas for a parent farm among heirs in settling an estate
- **Designation of Landowner Method** — may be used when (1) part of a farm is sold or ownership is transferred; (2) an entire farm is sold to two or more persons; (3) farm ownership is transferred to two or more persons; (4) part of a tract is sold or ownership is transferred; (5) a tract is sold to two or more persons; or (6) tract ownership is transferred to two or more persons. In order to use this method, the land sold must have been owned for at least three years, or a waiver granted, and the buyer and seller must sign a Memorandum of Understanding
- **DCP Cropland Method** — the division of bases in the same proportion that the DCP cropland for each resulting tract relates to the DCP cropland on the parent tract
- **Default Method** — the division of bases for a parent farm with each tract maintaining the bases attributed to the tract level when the reconstitution is initiated in the system.

For questions on your farm reconstitution, contact your local USDA Service Center.

Current Interest Rates for October

- Farm Operating Loans — Direct 1.250%
- Farm Ownership Loans — Direct 2.250%
- Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher — 1.50%
- Emergency Loans — 2.250%
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (3 years) — 0.125%
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (5 years) — 0.250%
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (7 years) — 0.500%
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (10 years) — 0.625%
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (12 years) — 0.750%
- Sugar Storage Facility Loans (15 year term) — 1.000%
- Commodity Loans — 1.125%

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).