

March 2015



Maryland FSA Newsletter

Maryland Farm Service Agency

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Please contact your [local FSA Office](#) for questions specific to your operation or county.

USDA Provides One-Time Extension of Deadline to Update Base Acres or Yield History for ARC/PLC Programs

Farmers Now Have Until March 31 to Update Yields and Reallocate Base Acres; Deadline for Choosing Between ARC and PLC also Remains March 31

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that a one-time extension will be provided to producers for the new safety-net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill, known as Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC). The final day to update yield history or reallocate base acres has been extended one additional month, from Feb. 27, 2015 until March 31, 2015. The final day for farm owners and producers to choose ARC or PLC coverage also remains March 31, 2015.

If no changes are made to yield history or base acres by March 31, 2015, the farm's current yield and base will be used. A program choice of ARC or PLC coverage also must be made by March 31, 2015, or there will be no 2014 payments for the farm and the farm will default to PLC coverage through the 2018 crop year.

Nationwide, more than 2.9 million educational postcards, in [English](#) and [Spanish](#), have been sent to producers, and over 4,100 training sessions have been conducted on the new safety-net programs. The online tools, available at www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc, allow producers to explore projections on how ARC or PLC coverage will affect their operation under possible future scenarios.

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 rice), safflower seed, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat. Upland cotton is no longer a

covered commodity.

To learn more, farmers can contact their local Farm Service Agency county office. To find your local office visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

USDA Reminds Maryland Producers of March 15 Sales Closing Date for Noninsurable Crops

Farm Service Agency (FSA) urges producers who want to purchase coverage through the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) to do so before the sales closing date of March 15, 2015.

NAP provides financial assistance to producers of noninsurable crops when low yields/grazing loss, loss of inventory or prevented planting occur due to natural disasters including drought, freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive wind or hurricanes.

In order to meet eligibility requirements for NAP, crops must be noninsurable, commercially-produced agricultural commodity crops for which the catastrophic risk protection level of crop insurance is not available.

The Agricultural Act of 2014 (the 2014 Farm Bill) allows producers to choose higher levels of NAP coverage. Previously, the program offered coverage at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production. Producers can now choose higher levels of coverage, up to 65 percent of their expected production at 100 percent of the average market price. It is important to note that the higher coverage is not available on grazing crops.

The NAP application closing dates for crops in Maryland are listed below:

NAP Sales Closing Date	Crop
September 1	Value loss crops or controlled environment crops, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, Christmas trees, ginseng, floriculture, mushrooms, turf grass sod
September 30	Biennial and Perennial forage crops, alfalfa, grass forages, mixed forages, and other forages
November 20	Perennial crops (other than those intended for forage), peaches, apples, cherries, grapes, berries
December 1	Honey and maple sap
December 31	Potatoes
February 15	Early spring vegetables with a crop reporting date of May 15th. This includes but is not limited to: asparagus, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, greens, horseradish, kale, lettuce, onions, peas and radishes
March 15	All other yield based crops

Eligible producers must file the application and pay a service fee by the March 15 deadline. Producers also pay a fixed premium for higher coverage. Beginning, limited resource and underserved producers may request a waiver of the service fee and a 50 percent premium reduction when the application for coverage is filed.

2015 Acreage Reporting Dates

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

The following acreage reporting dates are applicable for Maryland:

Reporting Date	Crop
December 15, 2014	Fall Forage Seeding, Perennial Forage, Fall-Seeded Small Grains
January 15, 2015	Apples, Peaches
May 15, 2015	Spring Forage Seeding, Peas (Green only), Potatoes
June 15, 2015	Tomatoes
July 15, 2015	Beans (Limas only), Cucumbers (Planted 4/20-6/25 in Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, and Talbot Counties), All Other Crops
August 15, 2015	Beans (all types except Limas), Cucumbers (Planted 6/26-8/10 in Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, and Talbot Counties)

The following exceptions apply to the above acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the above acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the above acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.
- If a perennial forage crop is reported with the intended use of “cover only,” “green manure,” “left standing,” or “seed,” then the acreage must be reported by July 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 dates listed above or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

For questions regarding crop certification and crop loss reports, please contact the [local FSA county office](#).

Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)

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

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

- Proof of death documentation
- Copy of growers contracts
- Proof of normal mortality documentation

USDA has established normal mortality rates for each type and weight range of eligible livestock, i.e. Adult Beef Cow = 1.5% and Non-Adult Beef Cattle (less than 400 pounds) = 3%. These established percentages reflect losses that are considered expected or typical under “normal” conditions. Producers who suffer livestock losses in 2015 must file both of the following:

- A notice of loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss was apparent or by January 30, 2016
- An application for payment by January 30, 2016.

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

FSA Signature Policy

Using the correct signature when doing business with FSA can save time and prevent a delay in program benefits. The following are FSA signature guidelines:

- Spouses may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and CCC programs in which either has an interest, unless written notification denying a spouse this authority has been provided to the county office
- Spouses shall not sign on behalf of each other as an authorized signatory for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations, or other similar entities

For additional clarification on proper signatures contact your local FSA office.

Loans for Targeted Underserved Producers

FSA has a number of loan programs available to assist applicants to begin or continue in agriculture production. Loans are available for operating type loans and/or purchase or improve farms or ranches.

While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, the FSA has provided priority funding for members of targeted underserved groups.

A targeted underserved applicant is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of his or her identity as members of the group without regard to his or her individual qualities.

For purposes of this program, targeted underserved groups are women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere.

Beginning Farmer Loans

FSA assists beginning farmers to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:

- Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years
- Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm
- Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA
- Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's average size farm.

Additional program information, loan applications, and other materials are available at your local USDA Service Center. You may also visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

Selected Interest Rates for March 2015		Dates to Remember	
90-Day Treasury Bill	.125%	March 15	NAP application closing date for all other yield based crops. Contact local county office for specific details.
Farm Operating Loans — Direct	2.50%	March 31	Deadline for land owners to update yield history and/or reallocate base acres
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct	3.50%	March 31	Deadline for producers to make a one-time election of either ARC or PLC for the 2014 through 2018 crop years
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.50%	March 31	Final Availability Date for MALs and LDPs for Barley, Canola, Crambe, Flaxseed, Honey, Oats, Rapeseed, Wheat, Sesame Seed
Emergency Loans	3.50%	May 15	Acreage Reporting Date for Spring Forage Seeding, Peas (Green only), Potatoes
Farm Storage Facility Loans (7 years)	1.750%	May 31	Final Availability Date for MALs and LDPs for Corn, Dry Peas, Grain Sorghum, Lentils, Mustard Seed, Rice, Safflower Seed, Chickpeas, Soybeans, Sunflower Seed
Farm Storage Facility Loans (10 years)	1.875%	June 15	Acreage Reporting Date for Tomatoes
Farm Storage Facility Loans (12 years)	2.000%	July 15	Acreage Reporting Date for Beans (Limás only), Cucumbers (Planted 4/20-6/25 in Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, and Talbot Counties), All Other Crops
Commodity Loans 1996-Present	1.250%	Aug 15	Acreage Reporting Date for Beans (all types except Limas), Cucumbers (Planted 6/26-8/10 in Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, and Talbot Counties)

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call [\(866\) 632-9992](tel:8666329992) (Toll-free Customer Service), [\(800\) 877-8339](tel:8008778339) (Local or Federal relay), [\(866\) 377-8642](tel:8663778642) (Relay voice users).