

February 2018



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

GovDelivery

Having trouble viewing this email? [View it as a Web page.](#)

- [2018 NAP: USDA Encourages Producers to Consider Risk Protection Coverage: March 15th Deadline](#)
- [Inform FSA Promptly of All Changes in Farming Operation and Contact Information](#)
- [Deadline for the 2017 Census of Agriculture is February 5th](#)
- [Montana Farm Service Agency Hiring Additional Loss Adjusters; Feb. 5th Application Deadline](#)
- [Livestock Indemnity Program \(LIP\)](#)
- [2017 Emergency Conservation Program \(ECP\) Drought](#)
- [2018 CRP Spring Managed Grazing Period: March 16-May 14](#)
- [Enrollment Period Continues for 2018 ARC-PLC Safety Net Coverage](#)
- [Breaking New Ground](#)
- [USDA Announces a Near-Record Year for Farm Loans](#)
- [Emergency Loans Available in Montana Disaster Areas](#)
- [Organic Certification Cost Share Program](#)
- [Foreign Persons Must Report U.S. Agricultural Land Holdings](#)
- [Upcoming FSA Program Dates and Deadlines](#)

Montana FSA: February 2018 Newsletter

USDA Farm Service Agency Montana

P.O. Box 670
Bozeman, MT 59771

Phone: 406.587.6872
Fax: 855.546.0264
Web: www.fsa.usda.gov/mt

Acting State Executive Director: Amy Webbink

State Committee:
Carl Mattson, Chair
Joe Dooling
Chaley Harney
Bruce Tutvedt

2018 NAP: USDA Encourages Producers to Consider Risk Protection Coverage: March 15th Deadline

Montana producers have until **March 15, 2018** to sign-up for Farm Service Agency's Noninsurable Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage for all 2018 spring planted NAP crops except spring seeded rye, speltz, triticale, wheat, and mixed forage.

NAP provides a catastrophic level (CAT) coverage based on the amount of loss that exceeds 50 percent of the expected production at 55 percent of the average market price for the crop. NAP offers buy-up coverage for the 2015 through 2018 crop years in addition to the basic CAT-level coverage, on all crops except those intended for grazing. These additional coverage levels range from 50-65 percent of the expected production, in 5 percent increments, at 100 percent of the average market price.

In order to meet eligibility requirements for NAP, crops must be noninsurable, commercially-produced agricultural commodity crops for which the catastrophic risk

Directories:

[Online Directory of FSA Offices in Montana](#)

[PDF of Montana FSA Directory](#)

[PDF of Montana USDA Directory](#)

Online Resource Links:

[FSA Factsheets](#)

[FSA Disaster Programs](#)

[FSA Farm Loan Programs](#)

[FSA Conservation Programs](#)

[FSA Price Support Programs](#)

[FSA ARC-PLC Programs](#)

[FSA Organic Certification Cost-Share Program](#)

[FSA Energy Programs](#)

[Montana NRCS](#)

[Montana RD](#)

[USDA New Farmers](#)

[Montana Department of Agriculture's Hay Hotline](#)

Special Accommodations:

Special accommodations will be made upon request for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment or hearing impairment. If accommodations are required, individuals should contact the county FSA office directly or by phone or the Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339. Alternatively, you may contact Montana FSA Civil Rights Coordinator Jennifer Cole at (406) 654.1333, ext. 117 or jennifer.cole@mt.usda.gov.

protection level of crop insurance is not available. If the Risk Management Agency (RMA) offers coverage for a crop in the county, NAP coverage is not available for that crop. For questions regarding insurability of a crop, please contact your local crop insurance agent. For information on whether a crop is eligible for NAP coverage, please contact your local FSA office.

The NAP service fee for all coverage levels is the lesser of \$250 per crop or \$750 per producer per administrative county, not to exceed a total of \$1,875 for a producer with farming interest in multiple counties. In addition to the service fee, producers who elect buy-up coverage must pay a premium equal to the lesser of 5.25 percent of the guarantee or 5.25 percent of the payment limit. FSA will waive NAP service fees and reduce buy-up premiums by 50 percent for underserved, limited resource, and beginning farmers. For questions regarding how to calculate the premium, please contact your local FSA office.

For more information, visit the national NAP page at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/nap>.

Link to: [NAP Program Factsheet](#) (pdf)

Inform FSA Promptly of All Changes in Farming Operation and Contact Information

It is important to promptly report any changes in your farming operation to FSA. These changes can include, but are not limited to, changes in your address, phone, or email, name changes, changes to entity membership or shares, formation or dissolution of any entity (such as a trust, partnership, LLC, LLP or corporation) that owns or operates land or owns other farming assets used in your operation, sale or purchase of land, adding or dropping leases, and any changes to financing or equipment. Participants in FSA and NRCS programs are required to timely report changes in their farming operation to their local FSA office in writing and update their CCC-902 Farm Operating Plan with necessary changes, as applicable. Failure to timely notify your local FSA office may result in ineligibility for program benefits, or delays in issuance of program payments. If you have any updates or corrections to your records, please call your local FSA office to update your records.

Deadline for the 2017 Census of Agriculture is February 5th

The Census of Agriculture is a Producer's Voice, Future, and Opportunity

USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) reminds our nation's farmers and ranchers of the deadline for the 2017 Census of Agriculture. Producers should respond online at www.agcounts.usda.gov or by mail by **Feb. 5**. The online questionnaire offers new timesaving features.

The Census of Agriculture is the only NASS questionnaire mailed to every producer across the country and is conducted just once every five years. The Census provides a complete account of the industry, its changes, and emerging trends. Census data are widely used, often relied on when developing the Farm Bill and other farm policy, and when making decisions about disaster relief, community planning, technology development, and more.

Everyone who received the 2017 Census of Agriculture questionnaire is to return it, even if they are not currently farming. The first few qualifying questions on the form will determine whether completing the entire questionnaire is necessary. **After the February 5 deadline, NASS will begin following-up with additional mailings, e-mails, phone calls, and personal appointments. To avoid these additional contacts, farmers and ranchers are asked to complete their Census as soon as possible.**

The Census is the only source of uniform, comprehensive, and impartial agriculture data for every state and county in the nation. Producers are required by law to respond; NASS is required by the same federal law to keep all information confidential, use the data only for statistical purposes, and only publish in aggregate form to prevent disclosing the identity of any individual producer or farm operation. For more information about the 2017 Census of Agriculture, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov or call (800) 727-9540.

Montana Farm Service Agency Hiring Additional Loss Adjusters; Feb. 5th Application Deadline

The USDA Farm Service Agency is currently accepting offers from individuals interested in providing contracted crop adjusting services throughout Montana for the 2018 crop year. Loss Adjuster applications for the 2018 crop year are due **Feb. 5** to the Montana FSA state office.

Loss Adjusters perform crop loss and related program services as assigned by FSA. Duties associated with these services include: 1) visiting farms to inspect damaged or destroyed crops; 2) appraising potential crop production; 3) determining and verifying the cause and time of loss; 4) determining farm-stored production; 5) visiting FSA offices and/or farms to perform inspections, reviews or other loss services.

As part of the contract process, Loss Adjusters must pass a required fingerprint background check.

Starting pay for new adjusters is \$10.00/hour. A pay raise to \$18.00/hour is contingent on satisfactory completion of a full certification on at least one crop. Most equipment necessary to perform loss-adjusting activities is provided by FSA. Mileage and per diem will be paid by FSA; however, contracted adjusters are expected to provide their own mode of transportation.

Applications should be sent to the Montana Farm Service Agency state office, attention Amanda Ness, P.O. Box 670, Bozeman, MT 59771. All applications postmarked by Feb. 5, 2018 will be reviewed and selections made based on work experience, agriculture background, availability and the need for loss adjusters in the area.

[Applications](#) may be found at any FSA county office, [electronically by clicking on this link](#) or by contacting Amanda Ness at 406-587-6870 or Shelly Rolando at 406-587-6877.

Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)

For the 2017 LIP Program, producers who suffered livestock deaths due to an eligible loss condition including eligible adverse weather events, eligible disease and eligible attacks from Jan. 1, 2017 through Dec. 31, 2017 must have

submitted a notice of loss within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock was first apparent. An application for payment must be filed with the local FSA County Office by the **March 31, 2018** deadline.

For the 2018 LIP Program, producers who suffer livestock deaths due to an eligible loss condition including eligible adverse weather events, eligible disease and eligible attacks from Jan. 1, 2018 through Dec. 31, 2018 must submit a notice of loss within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is first apparent. Livestock producers suffering livestock losses may submit the notice of loss to FSA by phone, fax, and email or in person. An application for payment must be filed with the local FSA County Office by the March 31, 2019 deadline.

Eligible adverse weather events include, but are not limited to, earthquake, hail, lightning, tornado, winter storm (lasting 3 consecutive days with high winds, freezing rain/sleet, heavy snowfall and extremely cold temperatures), floods, blizzards, wild fires, extreme heat, extreme cold, anthrax, straight-line winds, and cyanobacteria (blue-green algae poisoning) that directly results in the death of eligible livestock in excess of more than normal mortality.

Livestock producers must provide proof of death and inventory numbers of eligible livestock that died due to an eligible loss condition. The inventory numbers represent the number of eligible livestock before and after the eligible loss conditions that cause the death of the livestock.

Beginning and ending inventory documents can include, veterinary records, balance sheets, inventory numbers used for tax purposes, loan records, sales and purchase records and other similar documents. Proof of death documentation may be rendering truck receipts, FEMA records, veterinary records, private insurance documents, contemporaneous records that existed at the time of the eligible loss conditions, pictures with a date, and other similar documents.

For questions, contact your local FSA office and visit www.fsa.usda.gov/disaster. Link to: Livestock Indemnity Program Factsheet

2017 Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) Drought

If ECP practices for drought will not be completed by the practice expiration date, a request for an extension must be submitted to your County FSA Office. In your request, please describe your situation and why you haven't been able to complete the practices by the expiration date. Your request will be forwarded to the Conservation and Environmental Program Division for consideration at the national level. For questions, contact your local FSA office.

2018 CRP Spring Managed Grazing Period: March 16-May 14

Spring Managed Grazing: Livestock must be removed from CRP by May 14

Primary Nesting Season: May 15 to July 15

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) 2018 Spring Managed Grazing Period is March 16 to May 14, 2018. Livestock must be removed when the calculated AUMs have been utilized but no later than May 14th.

Summer/Fall Managed Harvesting Period begins July 16 following Montana's Primary Nesting Season and ends no later than Sept. 30. Summer/Fall Grazing Period begins July 16 and ends when the calculated AUMs have been utilized or no later than Sept. 13.

Producers are reminded to sign up at their local FSA office and complete a CRP-117 form for FSA office approval before conducting any managed harvesting and/or grazing activity.

Enrollment Period Continues for 2018 ARC-PLC Safety Net Coverage

Montana farmers and ranchers with base acres in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) safety net program may now enroll for the 2018 crop year. The enrollment period, which began on Nov. 1, will end on Aug. 1, 2018.

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

The producers on a farm that are not enrolled for the 2018 enrollment period will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs for the 2018 crop should crop prices, county revenues, or farm revenues fall below the historical price or revenue benchmarks established by the program. Producers who made their elections in previous years must still enroll during the 2018. For more information, contact your local FSA office and visit https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/arcplc_program/index.

Breaking New Ground

Agricultural producers are reminded to consult with FSA and Natural Resources Conservation Service (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 prior to conducting land leveling, filling, dredging, land clearing such as clearing trees to create new cropland, or drainage type projects to ensure the proposed activities meet compliance criteria. These areas will be reviewed by NRCS to ensure such work will not risk your eligibility for benefits.

Landowners, operators, and other tenants requesting benefits are required to complete form AD-1026 - Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification and identify the proposed activities to allow FSA to determine whether a referral to NRCS for further review is necessary.

USDA Announces a Near-Record Year for Farm Loans

Infusing Rural Communities with Stronger Businesses and Sounder Agricultural Economies

USDA Farm Service Agency announced another year of high activity in its farm loan programs. Hard-working farm families across the country accessed nearly \$6 billion in new credit, either directly or guaranteed through commercial lenders in 2017. At year end, FSA was assisting more than 120,000 family farmers with loans totaling just over \$25 billion.

FSA provides a variety of loan assistance, including direct and guaranteed farm ownership loans, operating loans and even direct Microloans up to \$50,000 and EZ Guarantees up to \$100,000 with streamlined application processes.

More than 25,000 direct and guaranteed FSA loans went to beginning or underserved farmers and ranchers. Over 4,200 beginning farmers received direct farm ownership loans from FSA to make their first land purchase. And of the approximately 6,500 Microloans made in the last fiscal year, three-quarters (almost 4,900) went to beginning farmers, 1,000 went to women and 400 to veterans.

FSA's direct farm loans are unique in that the agency provides technical assistance in addition to credit. Consistent with efforts to continually improve technical assistance, today FSA announced the publication of two booklets that will serve as important informational tools and resources for existing and prospective farm loan borrowers.

Your FSA Farm Loan Compass booklet was recently developed specifically for farmers and ranchers who have an existing farm loan with FSA. It provides detailed guidance outlining borrower responsibilities and the servicing options that FSA offers. It also addresses common questions borrowers may have as they navigate through loan program requirements and the financial concepts involved.

Originally published in 2012, **Your Guide to FSA Farm Loans** was designed for new loan customers. It provides information about the various types of farm loans available and guides new borrowers through the application process.

The revised version addresses program changes and includes new loan offerings, like the popular Microloan program that was rolled out after the publication of the original Guide.

“[Your FSA Farm Loan Compass](#)” and “[Your Guide to FSA Farm Loans](#)” are available on the FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov/dafi. Farmers and ranchers are encouraged to download and share them with others in their community who may require assistance in understanding FSA’s loans and servicing processes. For additional information about FSA farm loans, please contact your loan officer or other FSA staff at your local office. To find your local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Emergency Loans Available in Montana Disaster Areas

FSA’s Emergency Loan Program is available for agricultural producers in counties designated as primary or contiguous natural disaster areas. See map below of current Disaster Designations in Montana. Contact your local FSA office for specific designations in your area and time frames to apply. Eligible producers have **eight months** from the date of the disaster designation to apply for low-interest emergency loans to 1.) restore or replace essential property; 2.) pay all or part of production costs associated with the disaster year; 3.) pay essential family living expenses; or 4.) refinance certain debts, excluding real estate. Producers interested in applying for an emergency loan, or other FLP loans, should contact their local FSA office to set up an appointment with the Farm Loan Program staff serving your area.

[Current Disaster Designations in Montana](#) - (by county)

[Emergency Loan Factsheet](#) (pdf)

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, 2017, through Sept. 30, 2018, 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>.

Foreign Persons Must Report U.S. Agricultural Land Holdings

USDA Farm Service Agency in Montana reminds foreign persons with an interest in agricultural lands in the United States that they are required to report their holdings and any transactions to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture.

Any foreign person who acquires, transfers or holds any interest, other than a security interest, including leaseholds of 10 years or more, in agricultural land in the United States is required by law to report the transaction no later than 90 calendar days after the date of the transaction.

Foreign investors must file an [FSA-153](#) "Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) Report" with the FSA county office in the county where the land is located.

Failure to file a report, filing a late report or filing an inaccurate report, can result in a penalty with fines up to 25 percent of the fair market value of the agricultural land.

For AFIDA purposes, agricultural land is defined as any land used for farming, ranching or timber production, if the tracts total 10 acres or more.

Disclosure reports are also required when there are changes in land use. For example, reports are required when land use changes from nonagricultural to agricultural or from agricultural to nonagricultural. Foreign investors must also file a report when there is a change in the status of ownership such as the owner changes from foreign to non-foreign, from non-foreign to foreign or from foreign to foreign.

Data gained from these disclosures is used to prepare an annual report to the President and Congress concerning the effect of such holdings upon family farms and rural communities in the United States.

For more information regarding AFIDA and FSA programs, contact your local FSA office at www.fsa.usda.gov/mt or visit the USDA Web site at <http://www.usda.gov>.

Upcoming FSA Program Dates and Deadlines

Now through August 1, 2018: 2018 Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) & Price Loss Coverage (PLC) annual signup period

Feb. 1: Final Availability Date for Loans and Loan Deficiency Payment (LDP) for 2017 Mohair, Unshorn Pelts (LDP only) and Wool

Feb. 15: Deadline for producers to pay their 2017 NAP Premiums for Buy-Up Coverage

March 15: 2018 Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) Application Closing Date for Spring Crops (except spring seeded, rye, speltz, triticale, wheat and mixed forage)

March 16: 2018 CRP Spring Managed Grazing Period Begins (with prior County Committee written approval)

March 31: Application for Payment deadline for the 2017 Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP). (A notice of loss must have been filed with the local FSA office within 30 calendar days from when the 2017 loss was apparent.)

March 31: Final availability date for Loans and LDPs for 2017 Barley, Canola, Crambe, Flaxseed, Honey, Oats, Rapeseed, Wheat and Sesame Seed

May 14: 2018 CRP Spring Managed Grazing Period Ends (Livestock must be removed when the calculated AUMs have been utilized but no later than May 14.)

May 15 to July 15: Montana Primary Nesting Season

May 31: Final availability date for Loans and LDPs for 2017 Corn, Dry Peas, Grain Sorghum, Lentils, Mustard Seed, Rice, Safflower Seed, Chickpeas, Soybeans and Sunflower Seed

June 15: 2018 FSA County Committee Election Nomination Period Begins

July 16: 2018 Acreage Reporting Deadline for Spring Seeded Alfalfa Seed, Forage Seeding, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Fruit (except cherries), Vegetables, Christmas Trees, all Spring-Seeded Crops and all other crops not required to be reported by previously announced deadlines

July 16: 2018 CRP Summer/Fall Grazing Period Begins (with prior written approval)

July 16: 2018 CRP Managed Harvesting Period Begins (with prior written approval)

Aug. 1: Deadline for 2018 Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) & Price Loss Coverage (PLC) Enrollment

Aug. 1: 2018 FSA County Committee Election Nomination Period Deadline

Aug. 1: Last day to request FY 2018 farm reconstitutions on ARC & PLC farms

Aug. 1: Last day to request farm transfers for FY 2018

For more information, contact your local FSA office and/or visit Montana FSA online at www.fsa.usda.gov/mt.

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).