

April 2018



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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State Executive Director:
Mike Foster

From the State Executive Director Mike Foster

It has been a busy time since becoming the State Executive Director in Montana last month. In March and early April, USDA Farm Service Agency hosted several livestock program meetings across the state for producers affected by the winter storms. Meetings were held in Lame Deer, Harlowton, Browning, Choteau, Great Falls, Rocky Boy, Fort Belknap, Billings and Wolf Point. I greatly enjoyed meeting with the livestock producers many of whom have been hard-hit by our severe winter. A big 'Thank you!' goes to the Tribal leaders and colleges who hosted five of our meetings. The FSA staff did a great job organizing the meetings, making presentations, and answering questions. As an added bonus, we were able to stop by several local FSA offices where I met many

State Committee:

Carl Mattson, Chair
Joe Dooling
Chaley Harney
Bruce Tutvedt

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

wonderful people who clearly are very dedicated to providing excellent service for the ag producers in Montana.

As farmers and ranchers you know firsthand that natural disasters can occur at any time. It is very important that you stay in touch with your local FSA office to file a timely notice of loss, to ensure your records are current, to sign up for farm programs and to visit with the farm loan staff about a loan. Please take time to look through these important newsletter articles. FSA employees throughout Montana are on hand to assist you.

- Mike Foster

Ongoing FSA Notice of Loss Requirements

Montana farmers and ranchers are reminded to timely report all crop and livestock losses to your local Farm Service Agency office. For more information and any questions, please contact your local FSA office.

ELAP – Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program: Submit Notice of Loss the **earlier** of **30 calendar days** of when the loss is apparent or Nov. 1st after the end of the program year in which the loss occurred. Examples of ELAP losses include additional feed purchases in excess of normal and loss of damaged or destroyed purchased feed and/or mechanically harvested feed due to an eligible weather event. Producers may also be eligible for costs associated with transporting livestock feed to eligible livestock, including, but not limited to, costs associated with equipment rental fees for hay lifts and snow removal incurred in **combination** with losses due to additional feed purchases above normal or damaged or destroyed purchased or mechanically harvested forage. (see article below for more information)

LIP - Livestock Indemnity Program: Submit Notice of Loss **within 30 calendar days** of when the loss is apparent. File an Application for payment and supporting documentation no later than 90 days after the calendar year in which the loss occurred. (see article below for more information.)

NAP – Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program: Submit Notice of Loss within **15 calendar days** of the **earlier** of a natural disaster occurrence, the final planting date if planting is prevented by a natural disaster, the date that damage to the crop or loss of production becomes apparent; or the normal harvest date.

TAP - Tree Assistance Program: Final Date to Submit an Application and Supporting Documentation is the later of **90 calendar days** of the disaster event or the date when the loss is apparent

Visit FSA's national disaster assistance [website](#) at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/disaster-assistance-program/index> and [FSA's program factsheets](#) page at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/news-room/fact-sheets/index>.

[FSA Disaster Assistance Programs at a Glance Factsheet](#) (pdf)

USDA to Immediately Assist Producers for Qualifying 2017 Livestock, Honeybee & Farm-raised Fish Program Losses

\$34 Million in Payments for 2017 Losses Part of Broad Suite of Programs Aiding Ag Operations

USDA will issue \$34 million to help agricultural producers recover from 2017 natural disasters through the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program](#) (ELAP), which covers losses not covered by certain other USDA disaster assistance programs. County offices have begun issuing these payments, and they are part of a broader USDA effort to help producers recover from hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria, wildfires and drought. A large portion of this assistance will be made available in [federally designated disaster areas](#).

ELAP aims to help eligible producers of livestock, honeybees and farm-raised fish for losses due to disease, certain adverse weather events or loss conditions, including blizzards and wildfires, as determined by the Secretary. ELAP assistance is provided for losses not covered by other disaster assistance programs such as the [Livestock Forage Disaster Program \(LFP\)](#) and the [Livestock Indemnity Program \(LIP\)](#).

The increased amount of assistance through ELAP was made possible by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, signed earlier this year. The Act amended the 2014 Farm Bill to enable USDA's [Farm Service Agency](#) (FSA) to provide assistance to producers without an annual funding cap and immediately for 2017. It also enables FSA to pay ELAP applications as they are filed for 2018 and subsequent program years.

Other USDA Disaster Assistance Programs

The Act removed program year payment limitations and increased the acreage cap for the [Tree Assistance Program](#) (TAP), a nationwide program that provides owners of orchards, vineyards and nurseries with cost share assistance to replant eligible trees, bushes, and vines following a natural disaster. For example, the program will help owners of citrus groves in Florida, avocado trees in California, coffee plantations in Puerto Rico and vineyards reduce the cost of replanting, and speed recovery from the loss of fruit and nut trees, bushes, and vines.

Prior to the Act, there was a combined program year payment limitation of \$125,000 for ELAP, LIP and LFP per person or legal entity. The Tree Assistance Program (TAP) had its own \$125,000 payment limitation. The Act removed the program year per person and legal entity payment limitation for LIP and TAP. As a result of the Act, a \$125,000 per person and legal entity single payment limitation applies to the total amount of program year payments received under both ELAP and the [Livestock Forage Disaster Program](#) (LFP) and program payments under LIP and TAP no longer have payment limits.

Under the updated program, as amended by the Act, growers are eligible to be partly reimbursed for losses on up to 1,000 acres per program year, double the previous acreage limit of 500 acres.

In total, it is estimated that the Act will enable USDA to provide more than \$3 billion in disaster assistance, including the \$2.36 billion announced last week to be made available through FSA's new 2017 Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program. This includes \$400 million made available for the [Emergency Conservation Program](#), which helps farmers and ranchers repair damage to farmlands caused by natural disasters. As signups across the country are completed, additional applications will be funded.

According to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the United States was impacted by 16 separate billion-dollar disaster events in 2017 including: three tropical cyclones, eight severe storms, two inland floods, a crop freeze, drought and wildfire. More than 25 million people – almost eight percent of the population – were affected by major disasters. From severe flooding in Puerto Rico and Texas to mudslides and wildfires in California, major natural disasters caused catastrophic damages, with an economic impact totaling more than \$300 billion.

For Assistance

Producers with operations impacted by natural disasters and diseases in 2018 are encouraged to contact their [local USDA service center](#) to apply for assistance through ELAP, TAP, LIP and LFP. Producers with 2017 ELAP claims need to take no action as FSA will begin paying those claims on April 9.

USDA Implements 2017 Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program to Aid Recovery in Rural Communities

Montana Producers to Receive Recovery Assistance for 2017 Wildfires

USDA recently announced it will make disaster payments of up to \$2.36 billion, as provided by Congress, to help America's farmers and ranchers recover from hurricanes and wildfires. The funds are available as part of the new 2017 Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program (2017 WHIP). Sign-up for the new program, authorized by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, will begin no later than July 16.

The program will help producers in fire-impacted counties, including those in Montana, recover from the devastating impact of the 2017 wildfires.

Unlike counties in states devastated by hurricanes, a Presidential disaster declaration will not be required for producers in fire-impacted counties in Montana. Eligibility for the program for wildfire recovery will be determined at the local level.

The new 2017 WHIP will provide significant disaster assistance and be guided by the following principles:

- Compensation determined by a producer's individual losses rather than an average of losses for a particular area (where data is available);
- Producers who purchased higher levels of risk protection, such as crop insurance and noninsured crop disaster assistance program, will receive higher payments;
- Advance payments up to 50 percent; and
- A requirement that payment recipients obtain future risk protection.

The 2017 calendar year was a historic year for natural disasters, and this investment is part of a broader suite of programs that USDA is delivering to rural America to aid recovery. In total, the Act provided more than \$3 billion in disaster relief by creating new programs, and expediting or enhancing payments for producers.

FSA will distribute more information on how producers can file claims for WHIP disaster payments at a later date. For questions on how to establish farm records in preparation for a future WHIP disaster signup, or to learn about other disaster assistance programs, producers are asked to contact their [local USDA service center](#).

July 16th Deadline for 2018 Crop Certification/Acreage Reporting

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

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

The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the applicable 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 applicable 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 "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 applicable dates or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

Important reminder: A "Final" crop reporting date was established which is the crop's subsequent year's acreage reporting date. If a crop report is not submitted by the subsequent year's reporting date, or "Final" acreage

reporting date, the acreage report cannot be considered acceptable and producers will not receive planting credit for the crop nor will the crop be eligible for any FSA program benefits for the applicable program year.

For questions regarding crop certification and crop loss reports, please contact your local FSA office.

Link to [FSA Acreage Reporting Factsheet](#) (pdf)

Reporting Organic Crops

Producers who want to use the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) organic price and selected the "organic" option on their NAP application must report their crops as organic.

When certifying organic acres, the buffer zone acreage must be included in the organic acreage.

Producers must also provide a current organic plan, organic certificate or documentation from a certifying agent indicating an organic plan is in effect. Documentation must include:

- name of certified individuals
- address
- telephone number
- effective date of certification
- certificate number
- list of commodities certified
- name and address of certifying agent
- a map showing the specific location of each field of certified organic, including the buffer zone acreage

Certification exemptions are available for producers whose annual gross agricultural income from organic sales totals \$5,000 or less. Although exempt growers are not required to provide a written certificate, they are still required to provide a map showing the specific location of each field of certified organic, transitional and buffer zone acreage.

For questions about reporting organic crops, contact your local FSA office. To find your local office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

2018 Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybee, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)

The Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) provides emergency assistance to eligible livestock, honeybee, and farm-raised fish producers who have losses due to disease, adverse weather or other conditions, such as blizzards and wildfires, not covered by other agricultural disaster assistance programs.

Eligible livestock losses include grazing losses not covered under the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP), additional feed purchases in excess of normal and loss of purchased feed and/or mechanically harvested feed due to an eligible adverse weather event, additional cost of transporting water because of an eligible drought and additional cost associated with gathering livestock to treat for cattle tick fever.

Eligible honeybee losses include loss of purchased feed due to an eligible adverse weather event, cost of additional feed purchased above normal quantities due to an eligible adverse weather condition, colony losses in excess of normal mortality due to an eligible weather event or loss condition, including CCD, and hive losses due to eligible adverse weather.

Eligible farm-raised fish losses include death losses in excess of normal mortality and/or loss of purchased feed due to an eligible adverse weather event.

Producers who suffer eligible livestock, honeybee, or farm-raised fish losses from Oct. 1, 2017 to Sept. 30, 2018 must file:

- **A notice of loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent** or by Nov. 1, 2018

- An application for payment by Nov. 1, 2018

The following ELAP Fact Sheets (by topic) are available online:

- ELAP for Farm-Raised Fish Fact Sheet
- ELAP for Livestock Fact Sheet
- ELAP for Honeybees Fact Sheet

To view these and other FSA program fact sheets, visit the FSA fact sheet web page at www.fsa.usda.gov/factsheets.

Producers are Encouraged to Report Prevented Planting and Failed Acres

Producers are reminded to report prevented planting and failed acres in order to establish or retain FSA program eligibility for some programs. Producers should report crop acreage they intended to plant, but due to natural disaster, were prevented from planting. Prevented planting acreage must be reported on form CCC-576, Notice of Loss, **no later than 15 calendar days** after the final planting date as established by FSA and Risk Management Agency (RMA).

Contact your local FSA office for a list of final planting dates by crop.

If a producer is unable to report the prevented planting acreage within the 15 calendar days following the final planting date, a late-filed report can be submitted. Late-filed reports will only be accepted if FSA conducts a farm visit to assess the eligible disaster condition that prevented the crop from being planted. A measurement service fee will be charged.

Additionally, producers with failed acres should also use form CCC-576, Notice of Loss, to report failed acres.

Producers of hand-harvested crops must notify FSA of damage or loss through the administrative County Office **within 72 hours** of the date of damage or loss first becomes apparent. This notification can be provided by filing a CCC-576, email, fax or phone. Producers who notify the County Office by any method other than by filing the CCC-576 are still required to file a CCC-576, Notice of Loss, within the required 15 calendar days.

For losses on crops covered by the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), producers must file a Notice of Loss within 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent. Producers must timely file a Notice of Loss for failed acres on all crops including grasses.

Reporting Livestock Losses; 2018 Livestock Indemnity Program

For Farm Service Agency's 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](#)

Livestock Inventory Records

Producers are reminded to keep updated livestock inventory records. These records are necessary in the event of a natural disaster.

When disasters strike, the USDA Farm Service Agency can assist producers who suffered excessive livestock death losses and grazing or feed losses due to eligible natural disasters.

To participate in livestock disaster assistance programs, producers will be required to provide verifiable documentation of death losses resulting from an eligible adverse weather event and must submit a notice of loss to their local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is apparent. For grazing or feed losses, producers must submit a notice of loss to their local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent and should maintain documentation and receipts.

Producers should record all pertinent information regarding livestock inventory records including:

- Documentation of the number, kind, type, and weight range of livestock
- Beginning inventory supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts

For more information on documentation requirements, contact your local FSA office.

Still Time to be Counted in the 2017 Census of Agriculture

NASS to follow-up with producers who have not yet responded

Farmers and ranchers still have time to be counted in the 2017 Census of Agriculture, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). Although the first deadline has just passed, NASS will continue to accept Census information through the spring to get a complete and accurate picture of American agriculture that represents all farmers and ranchers.

Federal law mandates that everyone who received the 2017 Census of Agriculture questionnaire complete it and return it even if not currently farming. NASS will continue to follow-up with producers through the spring with mailings, phone calls, and personal visits. To avoid these additional contacts, farmers and ranchers are encouraged to complete their Census either online at www.agcounts.usda.gov or by mail as soon as possible. Responding online saves time by skipping sections that do not apply and automatically calculating totals. The online questionnaire is accessible on desktops, laptops, and mobile devices.

For more information about the 2017 Census of Agriculture, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov. For questions or assistance filling out the Census, call toll-free (888) 424-7828.

USDA Reopens Enrollment for Improved Dairy Safety Net Tool

USDA's Farm Service Agency encourages dairy producers to consider enrolling in the new and improved [Margin Protection Program for Dairy](#) (MPP-Dairy), which will provide better protections for dairy producers from shifting milk and feed prices. With changes authorized under the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, USDA Farm Service Agency has set the enrollment period to run from **April 9, 2018 to June 1, 2018**.

About the Program:

The program protects dairy producers by paying them when the difference between the national all-milk price and the national average feed cost (the margin) falls below a certain dollar amount elected by the producer.

Changes include:

- Calculations of the margin period is monthly rather than bi-monthly.
- Covered production is increased to 5 million pounds on the Tier 1 premium schedule, and premium rates for Tier 1 are substantially lowered.
- An exemption from paying an administrative fee for limited resource, beginning, veteran, and disadvantaged producers. Dairy operators enrolled in the previous 2018 enrollment period that qualify for this exemption under the new provisions may request a refund.

Dairy operations must make a new coverage election for 2018, even if you enrolled during the previous 2018 signup period. Coverage elections made for 2018 will be retroactive to January 1, 2018. All dairy operations desiring coverage must sign up during the enrollment period and submit an appropriate form (CCC-782) and dairy operations may still “opt out” by not submitting a form. All outstanding balances for 2017 and prior years must be paid in full before 2018 coverage is approved.

Dairy producers can participate in FSA's MPP-Dairy or the Risk Management Agency's Livestock Gross Margin Insurance Plan for Dairy Cattle (LGM-Dairy), but not both. During the 2018 enrollment period, only producers with an active LGM-Dairy policy who have targeted marketings insured in 2018 months will be allowed to enroll in MPP-Dairy by June 1, 2018; however, their coverage will start only after active target marketings conclude under LGM-Dairy.

USDA has a web tool to help producers determine the level of coverage under the MPP-Dairy that will provide them with the strongest safety net under a variety of conditions. The online resource, which will be updated and available by April 9 at www.fsa.usda.gov/mpptool, allows dairy farmers to quickly and easily combine unique operation data and other key variables to calculate their coverage needs based on price projections. Producers can also review historical data or estimate future coverage based on data projections. The secure site can be accessed via computer, smartphone, tablet or any other platform.

USDA is mailing postcards advising dairy producers of the changes. For more information, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/dairy or contact your [local USDA service center](#).

Link to [FSA's MPP-Dairy Factsheet](#)

Emergency Disaster Declarations and Designations

Farmers and ranchers know all too well that natural disasters can be a common, and likely a costly, variable to their operation. The Farm Service Agency has emergency assistance programs to provide assistance when disasters strike, and for some of those programs, a disaster designation may be the eligibility trigger. When natural disaster occurs, there is a process for requesting a USDA Secretarial disaster designation for a county. Agricultural producers can play a vital role in this process.

If you have experienced a production or physical loss as a result of a natural disaster you may submit a request to your local FSA county office for your county to be evaluated for a Secretarial disaster designation. Once a request is received, the county office will collect disaster data and create a Loss Assessment Report. The County Emergency Board will review the Loss Assessment Report and determine if a recommendation is sent forward to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture for the designation.

FSA administers four types of disaster designations:

USDA Secretarial Disaster Designation

- The designation process can be initiated by individual farmers, local government officials, State governors, State agriculture commissions, tribal councils or the FSA State Executive Director
- This designation is triggered by a 30-percent or greater production loss to at least one crop because of a natural disaster, or at least 1 producer who sustained individual losses because of a natural disaster and is unable to obtain commercial financing to cover those losses
- In 2012, USDA developed a fast-track process for disaster declarations for severe drought. This provides for a nearly automatic designation when, during the growing season, any portion of a county meets the D2

(Severe Drought) drought intensity value for eight consecutive weeks or a higher drought intensity value for any length of time as reported by the U.S. Drought Monitor (<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>)

Administrator's Physical Loss Notification

- This designation is initiated by the FSA State Executive Director.
- The designation is triggered by physical damage and losses because of a natural disaster, including but not limited to dead livestock, collapsed buildings, and destroyed farm structures.

Presidential Designation

- A Presidential major disaster designation and emergency declaration is initiated by the Governor of the impacted state through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).
- This designation is triggered by damage and losses caused by a disaster of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capability of the State and local governments.

Quarantine Designation

- This designation is requested of the Secretary of Agriculture by the FSA State Executive Director.
- A quarantine designation is triggered by damage and losses caused by the effects of a plant or animal quarantine approved by the Secretary under the Plant Protection Act or animal quarantine laws.

All four types of designations immediately trigger the availability of low-interest Emergency loans to eligible producers in all primary and contiguous counties. FSA borrowers in these counties who are unable to make their scheduled payments on any debt may be authorized to have certain set asides. Additional disaster assistance requiring a designation may also be provided by new programs in the future.

For more information on FSA disaster programs and disaster designations, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/disaster.

Link to [FSA Factsheet on Emergency Disaster Designation and Declaration Process](#) (pdf)

Communication is Key in Lending

Farm Service Agency is committed to providing our farm loan borrowers the tools necessary to be a success. A part of ensuring this success is providing guidance and counsel from the loan application process through the borrower's graduation to commercial lending institutions. While it is FSA's commitment to advise borrowers as they identify goals and evaluate progress, it is crucial for borrowers to communicate with their farm loan staff when changes occur. It is the borrower's responsibility to alert FSA to any of the following:

- Any changes to the ownership structure (individual ownership to LLC or corporation, for example)
- Any proposed or significant changes in the farming operation;
- Any significant changes to family income or expenses;
- The development of problem situations;
- Any losses or proposed significant changes in security

In addition, if a farm loan borrower cannot make payments to suppliers, other creditors, or FSA on time, contact your farm loan staff immediately to discuss loan servicing options. For more information on FSA farm loan programs, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans.

Document the Drought: USDA U.S. Drought Monitor Offers Producers a Voice to Report Drought Impacts

The U.S. Drought Monitor's reporting feature offers producers an opportunity to submit drought impact and condition reports.

The USDA, in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, produced the U.S. Drought Monitor to include a reporting feature that allows producers to report local drought impacts and conditions.

The report allows producers to:

- Provide a written description of drought impacts on livelihood, activities, etc.;
- Select categories to show losses and gains as a result of the drought;
- Report on the duration of drought event;
- Select Affected Places – geographic areas ranging from an entire state to a small area within a state;
- Submit images that document the drought and its impact;
- Provide contact information (includes an option to keep information confidential).

The reporting tool for producers to record the effects of the drought can be accessed at the following link:
<http://droughtreporter.unl.edu/submitreport/>

More information including state specific drought impact maps can be found on the U. S. Drought Monitor homepage: <http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/Home.aspx>

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.

Farm Storage Facility Loans

FSA's Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program provides low-interest financing to producers to build or upgrade storage facilities and to purchase portable (new or used) structures, equipment and storage and handling trucks.

The low-interest funds can be used to build or upgrade permanent facilities to store commodities. Eligible commodities include corn, grain sorghum, rice, soybeans, oats, peanuts, wheat, barley, minor oilseeds harvested as whole grain, pulse crops (lentils, chickpeas and dry peas), hay, honey, renewable biomass, fruits, nuts and vegetables for cold storage facilities, floriculture, hops, maple sap, rye, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, meat and poultry (unprocessed), eggs, and aquaculture (excluding systems that maintain live animals through uptake and discharge of water). Qualified facilities include grain bins, hay barns and cold storage facilities for eligible commodities.

Loans up to \$50,000 can be secured by a promissory note/security agreement and loans between \$50,000 and \$100,000 may require additional security. Loans exceeding \$100,000 require additional security.

Producers do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply. The loans are designed to assist a diverse range of farming operations, including small and mid-sized businesses, new farmers, operations supplying local food and farmers markets, non-traditional farm products, and underserved producers.

To learn more about the FSA Farm Storage Facility Loan, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport or contact your local FSA county office. To find your local FSA county office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Reporting Wind Turbines Constructed on Cropland

Producers who have wind turbines constructed on their farms should notify the local Farm Service Agency office. Any area that is no longer considered suitable as cropland (producing annual or perennial crops) should be designated in FSA's records and aerial photography maps. When base acres on a farm are converted to a non-agricultural commercial or industrial use, the total base acres on the farm must be reduced accordingly. Non-cropland areas used for wind turbines might impact payments calculated using base acres, such as Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC).

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>.

Upcoming FSA Program Dates and Deadlines

- [2018 Montana FSA Customer Calendar \(pdf\)](#)
- [2018 Upcoming FSA Deadlines Poster \(pdf\)](#)

Now through June 1, 2018: 2018 Margin Protection Program for Dairy (MPP-Dairy) Signup Period

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

Now through Oct. 1, 2018: 2019 Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program Application Closing Date for Annual Fall-Seeded Crops, Perennial Forage and Grazing, Mixed Forage Crops (including spring seeded annual types of missed forage), Rye, Speltz, Triticale, Wheat and Garlic

April 9: First day of signup for the 2018 Margin Protection Program for Dairy (MPP-Dairy)

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 1: Last day of sign-up for the 2018 Margin Protection Program for Dairy (MPP-Dairy)

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. **Please note that this is the final date that FSA can accept late-filed 2017 reports for these crops.**

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.

April 2018 Loan and Interest Rates

Commodity Loans –**3.000%**

Operating Loans – **3.500%**

Farm Ownership and Conservation Loans – **4.000%**

Farm Ownership-Joint Financing – **2.500%**

Emergency - Amount of Actual Loss - **3.750%**

Farm Ownership-Down Payment Loans – **1.500%**

Farm Storage Facility Loan, 3-Year – **2.375%**

Farm Storage Facility Loan, 5-Year – **2.625%**

Farm Storage Facility Loan, 7-Year – **2.750%**

Farm Storage Facility Loan, 10-Year – **2.875%**

Farm Storage Facility Loan, 12-Year – **2.875%**

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.

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).