

July 2018



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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From the State Executive Director

I hope this newsletter finds you in good health and spirits. FSA offices across Montana are busy assisting producers with spring crop certifications and program signups. If you haven't done so, I encourage you to contact your local FSA office to complete your 2018 crop certification and program paperwork. If you are experiencing agricultural losses due to flooding or other natural disasters, please timely report your losses to FSA.

Have a great and safe summer!

Sincerely,
Mike Foster

FSA Program Signups and Upcoming Deadlines

As a reminder, below are the current signups and upcoming program deadlines:

- **Now through July 16, 2018:** 2018 Crop Certification/ Acreage Reporting Period
- **Now through August 1, 2018:** 2018 Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) & Price Loss Coverage (PLC) Annual Signup Period
- **Now through August 1, 2018:** 2018 FSA County Committee Elections Nomination Period ([see 2017 Montana FSA County Committee Election Notice.](#))
- **Now through and Aug. 17, 2018:** Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Signup Period and 1-year Extensions on contracts expiring September 30, 2018
- **Now through Oct. 1, 2018:** 2019 Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program Application Period 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
- **May 15 to July 15:** Montana Primary Nesting Season
- **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)
- **July 16:** [2017 Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program](#) (2017 WHIP) Signup Begins
- **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
- **Aug. 17:** Last day of Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Signup Period and 1-year Extensions on expiring contracts
- **Sept. 4:** 2019 NAP Application Closing Date Value-Loss Crops such as nursery, Christmas trees, grass sod, ginseng, aquaculture, floriculture, root stock sets and mushrooms.
- **Sept. 13:** 2018 CRP Summer/Fall Grazing Period Ends
- **Sept. 30:** 2018 CRP Managed Harvesting Period Ends
- **Oct. 1:** 2019 NAP Application Closing Date for Annual Fall-Seeded Crops, Perennial Forage and Grazing, Mixed Forage Crops (including spring seeded annual types of mixed forage), Rye, Speltz, Triticale, Wheat and Garlic
- **Nov. 1:** 2018 Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees & Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) Application for Payment Deadline
- **Nov. 5:** County Committee Election Ballots will be mailed to Eligible Voters
- **Nov. 12:** All Hay Bales Must be Removed from Managed CRP
- **Nov. 15:** 2019 Acreage Reporting Deadline for Apiculture, Perennial Forage, Pasture, Rangeland, Forage (PRF) including native grass, fall wheat (Hard Red Winter), and all other fall-seeded small grains. Please note that this is the final date that FSA can accept late-filed 2018 reports for these crops.
- **Dec. 1:** 2019 NAP Application Closing Date for Honey Producers
- **Dec. 3:** Last Day to Return Voted County Committee Election Ballots to local FSA Offices

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 16th.

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.

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.

Important reminder: All crops and acreage must be reported no later than the crop's subsequent year's acreage reporting date. If a crop report is not submitted by the subsequent year's 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)

August 1st Enrollment Deadline Approaching 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 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 who do not enroll during the 2018 enrollment period will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs for the 2018 crop year. 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 Service Agency County Committee Elections Open Nomination Period: Aug. 1, 2018 Deadline

The nomination period for USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) County Committees runs June 15 through **Aug. 1, 2018**, and elections will take place starting in November.

[2018 Montana FSA County Committee Election Notice](#) (pdf)

County committees are unique to FSA and serve as a direct link between agricultural communities across the country and USDA. FSA's been across the country interviewing current committee members to spotlight their involvement in their county. [Read what they have to say](#) and check back each week.

For more information on FSA county committees, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/elections.

Continuous Conservation Reserve Program Enrollment

One-Year Extension Available to Holders of Many Expiring Contracts through Continuous Signup

As part of a 33-year effort to protect sensitive lands and improve water quality and wildlife habitat on private lands, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will resume accepting applications for the voluntary [Conservation Reserve Program](#) (CRP). Eligible farmers, ranchers, and private landowners can sign up at their local [Farm Service Agency \(FSA\)](#) office between **June 4 and Aug. 17, 2018**.

FSA stopped accepting applications last fall for the CRP continuous signup (excluding applications for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and CRP grasslands). This pause allowed USDA to review available acres and avoid exceeding the 24 million-acre CRP cap set by the 2014 Farm Bill. New limited practice availability and short sign up period helps ensure that landowners with the most sensitive acreage will enroll in the program and avoid unintended competition with new and beginning farmers seeking leases. CRP enrollment currently is about 22.7 million acres.

2018 Signup for CRP

For this year's signup, limited priority practices are available for continuous enrollment. They include grassed waterways, filter strips, riparian buffers, wetland restoration and others. [View a full list of practices](#).

FSA will use updated soil rental rates to make annual rental payments, reflecting current values. It will not offer incentive payments as part of the new signup.

USDA will not open a general signup this year, however, a one-year extension will be offered to existing CRP participants with expiring CRP contracts of 14 years or less. Producers eligible for an extension will receive a letter with more information.

CRP Grasslands

Additionally, FSA established new [ranking criteria](#) for [CRP Grasslands](#). To guarantee all CRP grasslands offers are treated equally, applicants who previously applied will be asked to reapply using the new ranking criteria. Producers with pending applications will receive a letter providing the options.

About CRP

In return for enrolling land in CRP, USDA, through FSA on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), provides participants with annual rental payments and cost-share assistance. Landowners enter into contracts that last between 10 and 15 years. CRP pays producers who remove sensitive lands from production and plant certain grasses, shrubs and trees that improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and increase wildlife habitat.

The new changes to CRP do not impact the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, a related program offered by CCC and state partners.

Producers wanting to apply for the CRP continuous signup or CRP grasslands should contact their USDA service center. To locate your local FSA office, visit <https://www.farmers.gov>. More information on CRP can be found at www.fsa.usda.gov/crp.

Perdue Announces Additional Hurricane and Wildfire Recovery Details

Under the direction of President Donald J. Trump, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced new details on eligibility for a new U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) disaster program, [2017 Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program](#) (2017 WHIP). In total, USDA's [Farm Service Agency](#) (FSA) will deploy the up to \$2.36 billion that Congress appropriated through the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 to help producers with recovery of their agricultural operations in at least nine states with hurricane damage and states impacted by wildfire.

Key Updates Include:

- Wildfire Recovery: Any crop, tree, bush or vine, damaged by a 2017 wildfire is eligible.
- Eligible Producers: Eligibility will be determined on an individual basis, using the level of insurance coverage purchased for 2017 for the total crop acres on the area for which the WHIP application is made. Eligible producers who certify to an average adjusted gross income (AGI) of at least 75 percent derived from farming or ranching, including other agriculture and forestry-based businesses during the tax years 2013, 2014 and 2015, will be eligible for a \$900,000 payment limitation with verification. All other eligible producers requesting 2017 WHIP benefits will be subject to a \$125,000 payment limitation.
- Crop Insurance Requirement: Both insured and uninsured producers are eligible to apply for WHIP. However, all producers opting to receive 2017 WHIP payments will be required to purchase crop insurance at the 60% coverage level, or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) at the 60% buy up coverage level if crop insurance is not available. Coverage must be in place for the next two applicable crop years to meet program requirements.
- Acreage Reporting Requirements: In addition, for the applicable crop years, all producers are required to file an acreage report and report production (if applicable).
- Payment Formula: FSA will calculate WHIP payments with this formula:

Payment = Expected Value of the Crop x WHIP Factor - Value of Crop Harvested - Insurance Indemnity

The WHIP factor ranges from 65 percent to 95 percent. Producers who did not insure their crops in 2017 will receive a 65 percent WHIP Factor. Insured producers, or producers who had NAP, will receive between 70 percent and 95 percent WHIP Factors; those purchasing higher levels of coverage will receive higher WHIP Factors.

Other USDA Disaster Assistance

Drought, wildfires and other disasters continue to impact farmers and ranchers, and 2017 WHIP is just one of many programs available through USDA to help with recovery. From crop insurance to on-the-ground rehabilitation programs like the [Emergency Conservation Program \(ECP\)](#) and [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#), USDA is here to help. The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 provided funding for ECP and the [Emergency Watershed Protection Program](#). The [Act also provided amendments](#) to make programs like the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program, Tree Assistance Program and Livestock Indemnity Program even more responsive.

More Information:

FSA will hold a sign-up for 2017 WHIP no later than July 16. Additional information on WHIP is available on [FSA's 2017 WHIP webpage](#). For immediate assistance under any of our other disaster programs, please contact a [local USDA service center](#) or learn more at www.fsa.usda.gov/disaster.

Reporting 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). For example, winter wheat planted/failed and the acreage is re-seeded to barley in the spring.

FSA cannot accept a CCC-576 prior to the final planting date. 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.

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.

Requesting Emergency Conservation Program Assistance for Flood Damage

Farmers and ranchers suffering severe damage from flooding can request assistance through FSA's Emergency Conservation Program (ECP). Affected producers can request ECP assistance through their local FSA office.

The types of ECP practices that can be available under this program include:

- removing debris from farmland
- grading, shaping, or releveling severely damaged farmland
- restoring permanent fences
- restoring conservation structures and other similar installations

ECP is administered by FSA to assist producers with the cost of recovery activities required to restore the agricultural land to pre-disaster conditions. Producers who sustained damage from this disaster event are encouraged to submit their request for assistance prior to beginning reconstructive work. Submitting a request after completing qualified reconstructive work may result in forfeiture of program eligibility.

Producers can submit ECP applications through the FSA county office. FSA county committees will complete an evaluation of submitted requests and will request national funding based on an on-site inspection of the damaged land, taking into consideration the type and extent of the eligible damage. Completion of the on-site inspection does not guarantee that cost-share funding will be allocated. The use of obligated funds is limited to return the land to the relative pre-disaster condition. Conservation concerns that were present on the land prior to the disaster are not eligible for ECP assistance. Approved ECP applicants may receive up to 75 percent of the cost of completing the approved restoration activity.

For more information on ECP, please contact your local FSA office.

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 page:
<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/CurrentMap/StateDroughtMonitor.aspx?MT>.

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 (OCCSP)

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/occsip/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>.

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](#)

Directories:

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

[PDF of Montana FSA Directory](#)

[PDF of Montana USDA Directory](#)

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).