

June 2019



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Montana FSA: June 2019 Newsletter

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From the State Executive Director

Hope you're enjoying the end of spring and the beginning of summer! We want to make sure you're current on FSA program news.

Montana FSA employees are gearing up to roll out some programs established with the 2018 Farm Bill. Our employees are receiving training on livestock and dairy programs and a Continuous CRP signup has just been announced. FSA will provide ARCPLC program details later this summer.

Last month, USDA announced that FSA will provide \$14.5 billion in direct payments to producers of certain commodities through the Market Facilitation Program for 2019 to assist producers affected by unjustified retaliatory tariffs and trade disruptions. Stay tuned for more details.

Liane Johnson (Cut Bank)
Bruce Tutvedt (Kalispell)

June will be a busy month in your local offices with acreage/crop certification, enrollment opening for two programs and nominations opening for FSA County Committee elections across Montana.

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@usda.gov.

FSA began accepting applications for certain practices under the continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) beginning **June 3**. A one-year extension will be offered to existing CRP participants who have expiring contracts of 14 years or less. Producers who are eligible for an extension will receive a letter with more information.

Dairy producers can begin enrolling in the new Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) Program starting **June 17**. Payments have already triggered for January, February and March for producers who purchase the appropriate level of coverage. Producers can use the [DMC decision tool](#) for help selecting the level of coverage that works best for their operation. Last month, FSA announced that dairy producers who had coverage under the Margin Protection Program for Dairy are eligible to receive a payment for part of the premiums paid into the program. Eligible dairy producers will receive a letter from FSA outlining their repayment options.

Thankfully flooding in our state has been fairly minimal. We're also keeping a close eye on the U.S. Drought Monitor. Reach out to your local FSA and USDA offices for program assistance and with any questions. FSA offices across Montana are ready to assist you.

Sincerely,
Mike Foster

USDA Reopens Continuous CRP Signup on June 3

USDA Farm Service Agency is accepting applications beginning June 3, 2019, for certain practices under the continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) signup and will offer extensions for expiring CRP contracts. The 2018 Farm Bill reauthorized CRP, one of the country's largest conservation programs.

FSA stopped accepting applications last fall for the continuous CRP signup when 2014 Farm Bill authority expired. Since passage of the 2018 Farm Bill last December, Fordyce said FSA has carefully analyzed the language and determined that a limited signup prioritizing water-quality practices furthers conservation goals and makes sense for producers as FSA works to fully implement the program.

Continuous CRP Signup

This year's signup will include such practices as grassed waterways, filter strips, riparian buffers, wetland restoration and others. [View a full list of practices approved for this program.](#)

Continuous signup enrollment contracts are 10 to 15 years in duration. Soil rental rates will be set at 90 percent of the existing rates. Incentive payments will not be offered for these contracts.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Signup

FSA will also reopen signup for existing Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) agreements. Fact sheets on current CREP agreements are available on [this webpage](#).

Other CRP Signup Options

FSA will open a CRP general signup in December 2019 and a CRP Grasslands signup later.

CRP Contract Extensions

A one-year extension will be offered to existing CRP participants who have expiring CRP contracts of 14 years or less. Producers eligible for an extension will receive a letter describing their options.

Alternatively, producers with expiring contracts may have the option to enroll in the Transition Incentives Program, which provides two additional annual rental payments on the condition the land is sold or rented to a beginning farmer or rancher or a member of a socially disadvantaged group.

More Information

Producers interested in applying for continuous CRP practices, including those under existing CREP agreements, or who need an extension, should contact their USDA service center beginning June 3. To locate your local FSA office, visit www.farmers.gov. More information on CRP can be found at www.fsa.usda.gov/crp.

Nominations Open for the 2019 County Committee Elections

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will begin accepting nominations for county committee members on Friday, June 14, 2019. Agricultural producers who participate or cooperate in an FSA program may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee. Individuals may nominate themselves or others as a candidate. Organizations, including those representing beginning, women and minority producers, also may nominate candidates.

Committees make important decisions about how federal farm programs are administered locally. Their input is vital on how FSA carries out disaster programs, as well as conservation, commodity and price support programs, county office employment and other agricultural issues. The committees are made of three to 11 members and typically meet once a month. Members serve three-year terms.

2019 Montana Nomination/Election Areas: To view the a [map and description of Montana areas up for election](#) this year by county, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/mt.

To be considered, a producer must sign an FSA-669A nomination form. The form and other information about FSA county committee elections are available at fsa.usda.gov/elections. All nomination forms for the 2019 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by Aug. 1, 2019.

Election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters beginning Nov. 4, 2019. Read more at fsa.usda.gov/elections.

FSA Maps - 2019 Acreage Reporting/Crop Certification Deadline: July 15

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. Producers are required to complete and submit their FSA maps as part of the crop certification process. The maps can be obtained at the local FSA office.

The 2019 Acreage Reporting/Crop Certification Deadline is **July 15, 2019** for **Spring Seeded Alfalfa Seed, Forage Seeding, CRP, Perennial Forage not covered under NAP, and all other crops not required to be reported by a previous reporting date**. These crops must be reported to FSA by July 15, 2019, to be considered timely filed in

order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements. Crops reported after July 15, 2019 may be subject to late-file fees that can be substantial depending on the number of acres seeded.

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.

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 and provide a copy of their current organic plan and recent written certification in effect from a certifying agent.

Important Reminder: If a crop report is not submitted by the subsequent year's acreage reporting date (ARD), 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, contact your local FSA office.

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.

CRP Management Reminder

A reminder that the Primary Nesting Season for CRP contracts is May 15 to July 15. No activity can be conducted during the Primary Nesting Season unless a written request is reviewed and approved by the County Committee before any activity can be completed. This includes spot-weed control and management activities.

Winter Canola Approved for NAP in Montana; Sept. 1, 2019 is the NAP application closing date for both 2020 Spring and Winter Canola

Montana FSA State Committee recently approved winter canola for the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), which results in a change for the spring canola application closing deadline that was previously in place as March 15th. For the 2020 NAP coverage year, the application closing date for both spring and winter canola will be Sept. 1, 2019.

Timely Filing a NAP Notice of Loss

Timely filing a Notice of Loss is required for all crops including grasses. For losses on crops covered by the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), producers must timely report damage or loss to their

administrative County Office. For all low yield and value-loss crop claims, a CCC-576 Part B Notice of Loss must be filed within 15 calendar days of earlier of the date disaster occurs (or becomes apparent) or the normal harvest date. However, all producers should be aware that deadlines to provide initial notice to FSA do now vary by method of harvest and crop.

Crops that are either hand-harvested or other crops determined by FSA to deteriorate quickly and therefore need prompt appraisal must notify FSA within 72 hours of the date of damage or loss first becomes apparent. This initial notice may be by the filing of the CCC-576 Part B, e-mail, FAX, or a phone call. When initial notice is by email, FAX, or phone, County Offices will provide a Receipt for Service with additional requirements. A *CCC-576 Notice of Loss* will still be required within 15 calendar days of earlier of date of occurrence/appearance of damage or harvest date.

Other crops, such as forages and grains, continue to have the 15 day requirement to file a required *CCC-576, Notice of Loss*, to report failed acreage and prevented planting and may be completed by any producer with an interest in the crop. This Notice of Loss must be filed within 15 calendar days of the earlier of date of occurrence/appearance of damage or harvest date.

If filing for prevented planting, an acreage report and CCC-576 Part B must be filed within 15 calendar days of the final planting date for the crop.

Further, to receive NAP assistance for claimed losses producers **must** timely file an Application for Payment on CCC-576 (Parts D through H) along with all required production records. Each producer on the unit must file their own application for payment. The deadline to apply for payment is 60 calendar days after the end of coverage for the crop year on the unit. There are no late-file provisions for NAP Applications for Payment.

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 \(pdf\)](#)

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>

USDA Accepting Applications to Help Cover Producers' Costs for Organic Certification

FSA announced that organic producers and handlers can apply for federal funds to assist with the cost of receiving and maintaining organic certification through the [Organic Certification Cost Share Program \(OCCSP\)](#). Applications for fiscal 2019 funding are due Oct. 31, 2019.

OCCSP received continued support through the 2018 Farm Bill. It provides cost-share assistance to producers and handlers of agricultural products for the costs of obtaining or maintaining organic certification under the USDA's National Organic Program. Eligible producers include any certified producers or handlers who have paid organic certification fees to a USDA-accredited certifying agent. Eligible expenses for cost-share reimbursement include application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement and arrangement requirements, travel expenses for inspectors, user fees, sales assessments and postage.

Certified producers and handlers are eligible to receive reimbursement for up to 75 percent of certification costs each year, up to a maximum of \$750 per certification scope, including crops, livestock, wild crops, handling and state organic program fees.

More Information

To learn more about organic certification cost share, please visit the [OCCSP webpage](#), view the [notice of funds availability on the Federal Register](#), or contact your [FSA county office](#). To learn more about USDA support for organic agriculture, visit usda.gov/organic.

Keeping Track of Important FSA Dates & Deadlines

FSA reminds agricultural of the following program dates and deadlines. Contact your local FSA office with any questions.

May 15 to July 15: Montana Primary Nesting Period

June 3: Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Enrollment Reopens

June 14 to Aug. 1: Nomination Period for 2019 FSA County Committee Elections

June 17: First day of Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) Program Signup

July 15: 2019 Acreage/Crop Reporting Deadline for Spring Seeded Alfalfa Seed, Forage Seeding, CRP, Perennial Forage not covered under NAP, and all other crops not required to be reported by a previous reporting date (*Please note that this is the final date that FSA can accept late-filed 2018 reports for these crops.*)

July 15: Deadline to submit 2018 Individual Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC-IC) Production Sheets (CCC-863)

July 16 to Sept. 13: 2019 CRP Summer/Fall Managed Harvesting Period (prior approval required)

Aug. 1: Deadline to request a farm reconstitution or farm transfer for 2019

Aug. 23: Last day to submit Continuous CRP Offer

Sept. 1: 2020 NAP Application for Coverage Deadline for Spring and Winter Canola & Value-Loss Crops such as Nursery, Christmas Trees, Grass Sod, Ginseng, Aquaculture, Floriculture, Root Stock Sets & Mushrooms

Sept. 30: 2020 NAP Application for Coverage Deadline 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

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