

November 2015



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## Montana FSA: November 2015 eNewsletter

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### State Executive Director:

Bruce Nelson

### State Committee:

### Fri, Nov. 13th is the Deadline to Increase Protections for Forage Crop Losses

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) deadline for producers to obtain or modify higher levels of coverage through the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) to protect against poor forage crop quality because of drought or other natural disasters where the forage is intended for mechanical harvest has been extended to today, **Fri., Nov. 13, 2015.**

Steve Carney, Chair  
Floyd Dahlman  
Kelly Flaherty-Settle  
Anita Matt  
Patricia Quisno

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**Reasonable**

**Accommodations:** People with disabilities who require accommodations to participate in FSA programs should contact the County Executive Director in the FSA Office in your area or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339. Alternatively, you may also contact Montana FSA Civil Rights Coordinator Jennifer Cole at (406) 587-6786 or [jennifer.cole@mt.usda.gov](mailto:jennifer.cole@mt.usda.gov).

For some 2016 forage crops, the application deadline for NAP occurred before information became available to measure losses due to quality that could influence loss payments, so the deadline was extended so that producers have more time to decide what type of modified coverage works best for their operation.

The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program protects agricultural crops for which crop insurance is not available from losses due to natural disasters, such as drought, freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive wind or hurricanes. The program offers basic coverage at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses exceeding 50 percent of expected production, and higher levels of coverage, up to 65 percent of expected production at 100 percent of the average market price. Higher coverage is not available on grazing crops. However, the extension does not afford producers the opportunity to purchase basic 50/55 NAP coverage.

Producers interested in adjusting their NAP coverage must submit the appropriate paperwork to their local FSA county office before the Nov. 13 deadline. To find your local USDA Service Center go to <http://offices.usda.gov>. For more details on the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/nap](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/nap).

**Questions?**

Please contact your local County FSA Office with any questions you may have regarding this message.

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## Fall Acreage Reporting Deadline is Mon., Nov. 16

Producers with the following 2016 crops must report the crops to FSA no later than November 16, 2015 to avoid late-file fees: Apiculture, Perennial Forage, Pasture, Rangeland, Forage (PRF) including native grass, fall wheat (Hard Red Winter), and all other fall-seeded small grains. The aforementioned crops must be reported to FSA by Nov. 16, 2015 to be considered timely filed in order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements. Producers are encouraged to visit their local FSA office to file an accurate, timely crop certification report no later than **Mon., Nov. 16**.

The following exceptions apply to the above acreage reporting date:

- If the crop has not been planted by the above acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.

- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the above acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.
- If a perennial forage crop is reported with the intended use of “cover only,” “green manure,” “left standing,” or “seed,” then the acreage must be reported by July 15th.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP covered crops is the earlier of the dates listed above or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

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## USDA Issues Safety-Net Payments to Montana Farmers Facing Market Downturn

FSA has begun issuing financial assistance for the 2014 crop year to a number of agricultural producers who are participating in the new safety-net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill. The new programs, known as Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC), are designed to protect against unexpected drops in crop prices or revenues due to market downturns.

Unlike the old direct payments program, which provided funds in good years and bad years, these new programs only provide financial assistance when prices or revenues drop below normal; this means that not all producers participating in ARC or PLC will receive a 2014 payment. Nationwide, many farms participating in 2014 ARC-County are receiving payments because they experienced a \$20 billion drop in county revenues relative to the historical benchmark. However, Montana farms enrolled in 2014 PLC are not receiving payments because no crops produced in Montana have suffered a price loss significant enough to trigger a payment. ARC – Individual payments have not yet been determined.

It is important to note that funds provided by the ARC-County program can vary from county to county. The 2014 Farm Bill requires ARC-County payments to be calculated using the national average market year price (which does not vary by county), and the average county yield (which varies by county). This creates county-by-county differences in payment rates. The county yield data comes from surveys conducted by the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the national standard that uses the highest-precision statistical procedures available. When that data does not exist, the next strongest data is used: county-level crop insurance data from the Risk Management Agency. If that data does not exist, the next strongest data is used: NASS district data. Where NASS district data doesn't exist, the FSA State Committees provide data.

Eligible producers will receive a payment if they have a farm enrolled in 2014 ARC-CO with base acres of a covered commodity that triggered a payment. The covered commodities that have currently triggered a payment under 2014 ARC-CO in Montana are as follows:

- **All Barley:** Hill, Phillips, Glacier, Blaine, Missoula
- **All Corn:** Treasure, Carbon, Prairie, Dawson, Rosebud, Richland, Roosevelt, Custer, Daniels, Sheridan, Blaine, Lake, Yellowstone, Missoula, Cascade, Chouteau, Teton, Liberty, Wheatland, Garfield, Hill, Musselshell, Petroleum, Carter, Fallon, Valley, Wibaux, Phillips, Gallatin
- **Irrigated Corn:** Big Horn, Golden Valley, McCone, Stillwater
- **Non-Irrigated Corn:** Big Horn, Golden Valley, McCone, Stillwater
- **All Dry Peas:** Daniels, Garfield, Glacier, Toole, Madison, Phillips, Hill
- **Irrigated Dry Peas:** Gallatin, Flathead
- **All Grain Sorghum:** Big Horn, Carter, Daniels, Roosevelt, Stillwater

- **All Lentils:** Toole, Liberty
- **All Oats:** Judith Basin
- **Non-Irrigated Oats:** Pondera, Teton, Sweet Grass
- **Irrigated Oats:** Big Horn, Blaine, Gallatin, Golden Valley, Musselshell, Pondera, Sweet Grass, Teton, Valley, Yellowstone, Flathead
- **All Soybeans:** Lake, McCone, Musselshell, Phillips, Richland, Rosebud, Roosevelt
- **All Wheat:** Hill, Petroleum, Blaine, Liberty, Daniels, Phillips, Rosebud
- **Irrigated Wheat:** Flathead
- **Non-Irrigated Wheat:** Lewis and Clark County

**Montana ARC-County Map:** To see a map of these crops that have triggered a payment [CLICK HERE](#) or copy and paste the following link into your web browser: [http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA\\_File/2014\\_arc-co\\_mt.pdf](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/2014_arc-co_mt.pdf) .

ARC/PLC payments are designed to help with unexpected changes in the marketplace, and to supplement other assistance programs, such as crop insurance. To learn more about the data used in calculating payments, how payments are calculated, crop-specific and state-specific information, please visit our website at [www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc).

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## Conservation Incentives for Working Grass, Range and Pasture Lands – Nov. 20 Signup Deadline

Signup for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Grasslands began on Sept. 1. Farmers and ranchers can apply for financial assistance to help conserve working grasslands, rangeland and pastureland while maintaining the areas as livestock grazing lands. The initiative is part of the voluntary CRP, a federally funded program that for 30 years has assisted agricultural producers with the cost of restoring, enhancing and protecting certain grasses, shrubs and trees to improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and reduce loss of wildlife habitat. In return, the USDA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance.

The CRP-Grasslands initiative will provide participants who establish long-term, resource-conserving covers with annual rental payments up to 75 percent of the grazing value of the land. Cost-share assistance is available for up to 50 percent of the covers and other practices, such as cross fencing to support rotational grazing or improving pasture cover to benefit pollinators or other wildlife. Participants may still conduct common grazing practices, produce hay, mow, or harvest for seed production, conduct fire rehabilitation, and construct firebreaks and fences. FSA will accept applications on an ongoing basis beginning Sept. 1, 2015, with those applications scored nationally and approved based on the competitiveness of the offer. The end of the first ranking period will be **Nov. 20, 2015**.

[CRP-Grasslands Factsheet](#)

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## Margin Protection Program – Dairy Registration and Coverage Election Deadline – Nov. 20 Signup Deadline

The registration and coverage election deadline for MPP-Dairy has been extended to **Nov. 20, 2015**. Furthermore, a change has been made in when the total premium fees must be paid. Effective immediately, for 2016 coverage, 100% of the total premium due must be paid by Sept. 1, 2016. Previously, producers had to pay a portion of the premium by Feb. 1st and balance by June 1st. With this change, producers have until **Sept. 1, 2016** to pay the entire premium due. [MPP-Dairy Factsheet](#)

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## **FSA County Committee Elections to Begin; Producers to Receive Ballots Week of Nov. 9**

### ***Farmers and Ranchers Have a Voice in Local Farm Program Decisions***

Farmers and ranchers across the country can now vote in their local 2015 FSA County Committee election. Ballots were mailed out nationwide on Monday, Nov. 9, 2015. Producers must return ballots to their local FSA offices by Dec. 7, 2015, to ensure that their vote is counted.

Nearly 7,700 FSA County Committee members serve FSA offices nationwide. Each committee has three to 11 elected members who serve three-year terms of office. One-third of county committee seats are up for election each year. County committee members apply their knowledge and judgment to help FSA make important decisions on its commodity support programs; conservation programs; indemnity and disaster programs; emergency programs and eligibility.

Producers must participate or cooperate in an FSA program to be eligible to vote in the county committee election. Approximately 1.9 million producers are currently eligible to vote. Farmers and ranchers who supervise and conduct the farming operations of an entire farm, but are not of legal voting age, also may be eligible to vote.

Farmers and ranchers will begin receiving their ballots the week of Nov. 9. Ballots include the names of candidates running for the local committee election. FSA has modified the ballot, making it more easily identifiable and less likely to be overlooked. Voters who do not receive ballots in the coming week can pick one up at their local FSA office. Ballots returned by mail must be postmarked no later than Dec. 7, 2015. Newly elected committee members and their alternates will take office Jan. 1, 2016.

For more information, visit the FSA website at [www.fsa.usda.gov/elections](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/elections). You may also contact your local USDA Service Center or FSA office. Visit <http://offices.usda.gov> to find an FSA office near you.

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## **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) General Signup: Dec. 1 to Feb. 26**

USDA has announced that FSA will conduct a CRP General Signup from Dec 1, 2015 to Feb. 26, 2016. Producers can submit general signup offers to FSA during that time period. Continuous CRP applications are accepted on an ongoing basis. For questions about CRP and any FSA program contact your local FSA office and visit Montana FSA online at [www.fsa.usda.gov/mt](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mt).

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## **Emergency Loans – Secretarial Disaster Designations in Montana**

FSA's Emergency Loan Program is available for agricultural producers in counties designated as primary or contiguous natural disaster areas (See Map Below of 2015 Montana Designations by County). 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.

[Cumulative Disaster Designation Map for 2015](#)

[Emergency Loan Factsheet](#)

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## Farm Loan Program Availability

FSA has a number of loan programs available to assist applicants to begin or continue in agricultural production. As a farmer or rancher, whether you are just starting out or have many years of experience, loans are available for farm operating purposes and/or to purchase or improve a farm or ranch. All qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs. As the “Lender of First Opportunity” FSA targets some of the direct and guaranteed loan funds for beginning and/or underserved farmers or ranchers. For purposes of this program, a beginning farmer/rancher is defined as someone who started in farming or ranching less than 10 years ago; underserved individuals are women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere. For more information, contact your local FSA office who can schedule an appointment with the Farm Loan Program (FLP) staff serving your area and/or visit the [National FLP Web site](#).

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## New USDA Commitments to Help Build Up Next Generation of Farmers and Ranchers

USDA announced a commitment by the USDA to prioritize \$5.6 billion over the next two years within USDA programs and services that serve new and beginning farmers and ranchers. Deputy Secretary Harden also announced a new, tailored web tool designed to connect burgeoning farm entrepreneurs with programs and resources available to help them get started.

The new web tool is available at [www.usda.gov/newfarmers](http://www.usda.gov/newfarmers). The site was designed based on feedback from new and beginning farmers and ranchers around the country, who cited unfamiliarity with programs and resources as a challenge to starting and expanding their operations. The site features advice and guidance on everything a new farm business owner needs to know, from writing a business plan, to obtaining a loan to grow their business, to filing taxes as a new small business owner. By answering a series of questions about their operation, farmers can use the site’s Discovery Tool to build a personalized set of recommendations of USDA programs and services that may meet their needs.

Using the new web tool and other outreach activities, and operating within its existing resources, USDA has set a new goal of increasing beginning farmer and rancher participation by an additional 6.6 percent across key USDA programs, which were established or strengthened by the 2014 Farm Bill, for a total investment value of approximately \$5.6 billion. Programs were targeted for expanded outreach and commitment based on their impact on expanding opportunity for new and beginning farmers and ranchers, including starting or expanding an operation, developing new markets, supporting more effective farming and conservation practices, and having access to relevant training and education opportunities. USDA will provide quarterly updates on its progress towards meeting its goal. A full explanation of the investment targets, benchmarks and outcomes is available at: [BFR-Commitment-Factsheet](#).

As the average age of the American farmer now exceeds 58 years, and data shows that almost 10 percent of farmland in the continental United States will change hands in the next five years, we

have no time to lose in getting more new farmers and ranchers established. Equally important is encouraging young people to pursue careers in industries that support American agriculture. According to [an employment outlook report](#) released by USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and Purdue University, one of the best fields for new college graduates is agriculture. Nearly 60,000 high-skilled agriculture job openings are expected annually in the United States for the next five years, yet only 35,000 graduates with a bachelor's degree or higher in agriculture related fields are expected to be available to fill them. The report also shows that women make up more than half of the food, agriculture, renewable natural resources, and environment higher education graduates in the United States. USDA recently released a [series of fact sheets](#) showcasing the impact of women in agriculture nationwide.

Today's announcement builds on USDA's ongoing work to engage its resources to inspire a strong next generation of farmers and ranchers by improving access to land and capital; building market opportunities; extending conservation opportunities; offering appropriate risk management tools; and increasing outreach and technical support. To learn more about USDA's efforts, visit the [Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Results Page](#).

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## 2015 Livestock Forage Disaster Program Available in 21 Montana Counties: Deadline to apply is Feb. 1, 2016

Livestock producers in 21 Montana counties are now eligible to apply for 2015 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) benefits on small grain, native pasture, improved pasture, annual ryegrass and forage sorghum. LFP provides compensation to eligible livestock producers who suffer grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land or fire on federally managed land.

Eligible producers must own or lease grazing land physically located in a county affected by a qualifying drought during the normal grazing period for the county. County committees can only accept LFP applications after notification is received by the National Office of qualifying drought or if a federal agency prohibits producers from grazing normal permitted livestock on federally managed lands due to qualifying fire.

A total to 21 Montana counties have triggered drought eligibility for the 2015 LFP Program. Qualifying livestock producers with land in **Broadwater, Gallatin, Madison counties** are eligible for one monthly payment. Livestock producers in **Beaverhead, Deer Lodge, Flathead, Glacier, Granite, Jefferson, Lake, Lewis and Clark, Lincoln, Mineral, Missoula, Pondera, Powell, Ravalli, Sanders, Silver Bow, Teton and Toole counties** are eligible for four monthly payments.

For 2015 and subsequent years, eligible livestock producers must complete a CCC-853 and the required supporting documentation no later **Feb. 1, 2016**. Additional Information about LFP, including eligible livestock and fire criteria, is available at your local FSA office or online at: [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

LFP provided almost \$60 million in disaster relief to more than 4,100 Montana livestock producers for the 2012 and 2013 crop years

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## Customers to Receive Documentation of USDA Services

### Local Offices Issue Receipts for Services Provided

FSA reminds agricultural producers that FSA provides a receipt to customers who request or receive assistance or information on FSA programs. As part of FSA's mission to provide enhanced

customer service, producers who visit FSA will receive documentation of services requested and provided. From December through June, FSA issued more than 327,000 electronic receipts. The 2014 Farm Bill requires a receipt to be issued for any agricultural program assistance requested from FSA, the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Rural Development (RD). Receipts include the date, summary of the visit and any agricultural information, program and/or loan assistance provided to an individual or entity.

In some cases, a form or document – such as a completed and signed program enrollment form – serve as the customer receipt instead of a printed or electronic receipt. A service is any information, program or loan assistance provided whether through a visit, email, fax or letter. To learn more about FSA, visit [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov) or to find your local USDA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

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## Producers are Reminded to Complete NASS Crop Surveys this December

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Field Offices are currently completing 2015 small grain yield surveys and will contact growers in December to complete row crop yield surveys. If you are one of the producers contacted to complete a 2015 yield survey, we encourage your participation and cooperation as many USDA agencies use the NASS yield data for their programs. Both FSA and RMA are users of the NASS county yield data for many programs.

For example, FSA uses the NASS county yield data for farm credit, conservation, disaster program, loan and commodity programs. Specifically, under the 2014 Farm Bill, FSA uses the NASS county yield data to calculate Agriculture Risk Coverage – County (ARC-CO) benchmark revenues and current year county revenues. For example, the 2014 NASS county yield, along with the crop's marketing year average price (MYA), are used to determine the county's current year revenue to determine if the county will trigger an ARC-CO payment. An ARC-CO payment is triggered for a county when the current year revenue falls below the guarantee revenue for the crop and crop year. In cases where NASS county yield data is not available, the State Committee must determine a county yield using RMA yield data or the best available yield data available, including assigning a county yield using neighboring county yields from NASS or RMA.

Any information that producers provide to NASS is kept confidential and protected by federal law. NASS publishes only aggregate-level data, ensuring that no individual operation or producer can be identified. All reports will be available on the internet at [www.nass.usda.gov](http://www.nass.usda.gov).

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## Upcoming 2015 & 2016 Dates and Deadlines

- **Nov. 13:** Deadline for Electing Buy-Up Coverage for 2016 NAP Forage to take advantage of Quality Loss Adjustment
- **Nov. 16:** 2016 Acreage Reporting Deadline for Apiculture, Perennial Forage, Pasture, Rangeland & Forage (PRF) including Native Grass, Fall Wheat (Hard Red Winter – HRW), and all other Fall-Seeded Small Grains
- **Nov. 20:** Application Deadline for CRP Working Grass, Range and Pasture Lands Initiative
- **Nov. 20:** Last day of the Registration/Coverage Election Period for 2016 MPP-Dairy Program
- **Dec. 1:** CRP General Signup Begins
- **Dec. 1:** 2016 NAP Application Closing Date for Honey Producers
- **Dec. 7:** Last Day to Return Voted County Committee Election Ballots to FSA at the local USDA Service Center
- **Jan. 1:** Newly Elected County Committee Members Take Office

- **Jan. 2:** 2016 Acreage Reporting Deadline (or 30 days after placement of colonies) Honey covered under NAP
- **Jan 15:** 2016 Acreage Reporting Deadline for Established Stand Alfalfa Seed, Fall Alfalfa Seed, Cherries
- **Feb. 1:** Deadline for the 2015 Livestock Forage Program (LFP) Notice of Loss, Application for Payment and Supporting Documentation
- **Feb. 1:** Deadline for 2015 Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) Application for Payment
- **Feb. 1:** Deadline for Tree Assistance Program (TAP) Application for Payment and Supporting Documentation for Loss for 2015 (or 90 days after disaster event or loss was apparent)
- **Feb. 1:** Final Availability Date for Loans and LDPs for Mohair, Unshorn Pelts (LDP only) & Wool
- **Feb. 26:** Last Day of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) General Signup
- **March 15:** 2016 NAP Application Closing Date for Spring Crops
- **March 31:** Final Availability Date for Loans and LDPs for Barley, Canola, Crambe, Flaxseed, Honey, Oats, Rapeseed, Wheat and Sesame Seed
- **May 31:** Final Availability Date for Loans and LDPs for Corn, Dry Peas, Grain Sorghum, Lentils, Mustard Seed, Rice, Safflower Seed, Chickpeas, Soybeans and Sunflower Seed

### **Ongoing Notice of Loss Requirements:**

- **NAP:** 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.
- **ELAP:** 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.
- **Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP):** Submit Notice of Loss within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent.

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