

May 2016



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

Montana FSA: May 2016 eNewsletter

Table of Contents:

- [2016 Spring Crop Certification/Acreage Reporting Continues; Upcoming Dates](#)
- [Importance of Timely Crop Certification/Acreage Reporting](#)
- [2015 ARC-IC – Farm Benchmark and Actual Yield Certification](#)
- [ARC-PLC: Enrollment Period for 2016 USDA Safety Net Coverage Continues; Aug. 1st Deadline](#)
- [Conservation Reserve Program Results Announced](#)
- [FSFL Offers New Loans for Portable Farm Storage and Handling Equipment](#)
- [USDA Expands Safety-Net for Dairy Operations Adding Next-Generation Family Members](#)
- [USDA Establishes New Partnerships to Link Underserved Producers to FSA Programs](#)
- [Beginning Farmer and Rancher Loans](#)
- [NRCS Sets Program Funding Application Cutoff for June 1](#)
- [Ag News from USDA Rural Development - July 1st Deadline to Apply for Value-Added Producer Grant](#)

USDA Farm Service Agency - Montana

P.O. Box 670
Bozeman, MT 59771

Phone: 406.587.6872

Fax: 855.546.0264

Web:

www.fsa.usda.gov/mt

State Executive

Director:

Bruce Nelson

State Committee:

Steve Carney, Chair

2016 Spring Crop Certification/Acreage Reporting Continues; Upcoming Dates

- **May 14:** 2016 CRP Spring Managed and Routine Grazing Period Ends
- **May 15 to July 15:** Primary Nesting Season (No activity approved on CRP)
- **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

Floyd Dahlman
Kelly Flaherty-Settle
Anita Matt
Patricia Quisno

**USDA Office
Directories:**

[Online Directory of FSA
Offices](#)

[PDF of Montana FSA
Directory](#)

[PDF of Montana USDA
Directory](#)

- **June 15:** The nomination period begins for County Committee Elections across Montana.
- **July 15:** 2016 Acreage Reporting/Crop Certification Deadline 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.
- **July 15:** Final 2015 NAP Final Production Reports are due for certain NAP crops
- **July 15:** Deadline for 2015 ARC-IC – Farm Benchmark and Actual Yield Certification
- **July 16:** CRP 2016 Summer/Fall Managed Harvesting and Routine Grazing Begins (with prior County Committee Approval of Request)
- **Aug. 1:** Deadline for 2016 ARC and PLC Enrollment
- **Aug. 1:** Deadline to request farm transfers for FY' 2016
- **Aug. 1:** Last day to file County Committee election nomination forms at the local USDA Service center

For more information about FSA programs, contact your local FSA office.

Importance of Timely 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 2016 Acreage Reporting/Crop Certification Deadline is **July 15, 2016** 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 "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 applicable dates or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

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

2015 ARC-IC – Farm Benchmark and Actual Yield Certification

Producers, who have a 2015 ARC-IC program contract on one or more FSA farms, must complete the certification of ARC-IC yields for each ARC-IC farm and each covered commodity planted in 2015 by not later than July 15, 2016.

Production evidence that can be used to support the certified yields can be from the following sources:

- Crop Insurance loss records
- Sales records (buyer specific)
- Crop Insurance APH data base records
- Farm stored production records, appraisals

For more information, contact your local FSA office.

ARC-PLC: Enrollment Period for 2016 USDA Safety Net Coverage Continues; Aug. 1st Deadline

FSA has announced that **Aug. 1, 2016** is the deadline for producers to complete the annual enrollment process for the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs.

Producers previously made a program election of ARC or PLC for their eligible farms; the program election remains in effect through 2018. However, producers must still enroll their farm by signing a contract each year to be eligible for potential payments.

Producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office to schedule an appointment to enroll. If a farm is not enrolled during the 2016 enrollment period, producers on that farm will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs should crop prices or farm revenues fall below the historical price or revenue benchmarks established by the program.

The two programs were authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill and offer a safety net to agricultural producers when there is a substantial drop in prices or revenues for covered commodities. Covered commodities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium grain rice (which includes short grain and sweet rice), safflower seed, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat. Upland cotton is no longer a covered commodity. For more details regarding these programs, go to www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.

For more information, producers are encouraged to visit their local FSA office. To find a local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Conservation Reserve Program Results Announced

More Than 26,600 Acres in Montana Selected Through Highly Competitive Application Rounds

USDA announced the enrollment of more than 26,600 acres in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) general and grasslands signups in Montana.

FSA will accept 17,829 acres in general enrollment in Montana, the most competitive selection in the history of the program, with the acreage providing record high conservation benefits. USDA selected offers by weighing environmental factors plus cost, including wildlife enhancement, water quality, soil erosion, enduring benefits, and air quality.

The results of the first-ever enrollment period for CRP Grasslands, FSA will also accept 8,857.5 acres in the program in Montana, providing participants with financial assistance for establishing approved grasses, trees and shrubs on pasture and rangeland that can continue to be grazed. FSA continues to accept CRP Grasslands offers and will conduct another ranking period later this year.

Participants in CRP establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as “covers”) to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat on marginally productive agricultural lands. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years.

To learn more about FSA’s conservation programs, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/mt or contact a local FSA county office. To find your local FSA county office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

FSFL Offers New Loans for Portable Farm Storage and Handling Equipment

Portable Equipment Can Help Producers, including Small-Scale and Local Farmers, Get Products to Market Quickly

FSA will provide a new financing option to help farmers purchase portable storage and handling equipment through the Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program.

The program offers a new “microloan” option, which allows applicants seeking less than \$50,000 to qualify for a reduced down payment of five percent and no requirement to provide three years of production history. Farms and ranches of all sizes are eligible. Producers can invest in equipment like conveyers, scales or refrigeration units and trucks that can store commodities before delivering them to markets. Producers do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply.

FSFL eligible commodities include aquaculture; floriculture; fruits (including nuts) and vegetables; corn, grain sorghum, rice, oilseeds, oats, wheat, triticale, spelt, buckwheat, lentils, chickpeas, dry peas sugar, peanuts, barley, rye, hay, honey, hops, maple sap, unprocessed meat and poultry, eggs, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt and renewable biomass. FSFL microloans can also be used to finance wash and pack equipment used post-harvest, before a commodity is placed in cold storage.

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

USDA Expands Safety-Net for Dairy Operations Adding Next-Generation Family Members

Dairy farms participating in the Margin Protection Program (MPP) can now update their production history when an eligible family member joins the operation. The voluntary program, established by the 2014 Farm Bill, protects participating dairy producers when the margin – the difference between the price of milk and feed costs – falls below levels of protection selected by the applicant.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) published a final rule which makes these changes effective on April 13, 2016. Any dairy operation already enrolled in the MPP that had an intergenerational transfer occur will have an opportunity to increase the dairy operation's production history during the 2017 registration and annual coverage election period. The next election period begins on July 1, 2016, and ends on Sept. 30, 2016. For intergenerational transfers occurring on or after July 1, 2016, notification must be made to the FSA within 60 days of purchasing the additional cows. Each participating dairy operation is authorized one intergenerational transfer at any time of its choosing until 2018.

For \$100 a year, dairy producers can receive basic catastrophic protection that covers 90 percent of milk production at a \$4 margin coverage level. For additional premiums, operations can protect 25 to 90 percent of production history with margin coverage levels from \$4.50 to \$8, in 50 cent increments. Annual enrollment in the program is required in order to receive margin protection. The final rule also provides improved risk protection for dairy farmers that pay premiums to buy-up higher levels of coverage by clarifying that 90 percent of production is covered below the \$4 level even if a lower percentage was selected above the \$4 margin.

For more information, visit FSA online at www.fsa.usda.gov/dairy or stop by a local FSA office and ask about the Margin Protection Program. To find a local FSA office in your area, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

USDA Establishes New Partnerships to Link Underserved Producers to FSA Programs

Minority, Women, New and Beginning, Military Veteran and Urban Producers to Receive Training and Information on Agency Services

USDA announced cooperative agreements with 55 partners to educate farmers and other producers that have been underserved by USDA programs historically about Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs that provide financial, disaster or technical support. Nearly \$2.5 million will go to nonprofits, associations, universities, and foundations that will provide training and information on agricultural best practices, local networking opportunities, and more.

FSA, which solicited applications last fall, received nearly 100 proposals that requested over \$9 million in funding. Cooperative agreements, encompassing more than 28 states, will be between \$20,000 and \$75,000 each and several involve multi-state or national efforts. A list of awardees can be found at www.fsa.usda.gov/outreach.

FSA also announced today that it is accepting proposals for consideration in the second evaluation period. Applications are due no later than July 11, 2016. Projects not selected during the first evaluation period will be reconsidered during the second period. Additional information on the funding solicitation and the related FSA programs can be found at www.grants.gov using reference number USDA-FSA-CA-2016-001. For nonprofits and public institutions of higher education that are

considering participation, a recording of the online informational session held with stakeholders is posted on the web at www.fsa.usda.gov/outreach.

USDA is also helping producers find an entry into farming through urban agriculture opportunities and the increasing consumer demand for locally-produced items. Under this Administration, USDA has invested more than \$1 billion in over 40,000 local and regional food businesses and infrastructure projects. USDA is committed to helping farmers, ranchers, and businesses access the growing market for local and regional foods, which was valued at \$12 billion in 2014 according to industry estimates. More information on how USDA investments are connecting producers with consumers and expanding rural economic opportunities is available in [Chapter IV](#) of [USDA Results on Medium](#).

Beginning Farmer and Rancher Loans

FSA assists beginning farmers to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:

- Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years
- Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm
- Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA
- Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's average size farm.

Additional program information, loan applications, and other materials are available at your local USDA Service Center. You may also visit Montana FSA online at www.fsa.usda.gov/mt and the national Farm Loan Program page at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/index>.

NRCS Sets Program Funding Application Cutoff for June 1

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has set a June 1, 2016, application cutoff for agricultural operators to be considered for 2017 conservation program funding through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

NRCS provides funding and technical assistance to help farmers and ranchers implement conservation practices that provide environmental benefits to help sustain agricultural operations. Conservation program participation is voluntary and helps private landowners and operators defray the costs of installing conservation practices.

NRCS accepts conservation program applications year-round; however, applications for 2017 funding consideration must be submitted by June 1, 2016. Applications made after the June 1 cutoff will be considered in the next funding cycle. Additional information is available on the Montana NRCS website at www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov under the Programs tab or you can contact your local NRCS service center.

Ag News from USDA Rural Development - July 1st Deadline to Apply for Value-Added Producer Grant

USDA Rural Development is accepting applications for the Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program.

The VAPG program helps independent producers and agricultural producer groups, farmer-or-rancher-cooperatives, and majority-controlled producer-based business ventures enter into value-added activities related to the processing and/or marketing of bio-based value-added products. Generating new products, creating and expanding marketing opportunities, and increasing producer income are the goals of this program.

Value-added processing and marketing helps farmers and ranchers receive a higher portion of the retail dollar. Value-Added Producer Grants support planning activities, such as developing a business plan, as well as working capital.

Grants are awarded through a national competition. The maximum grant amount for planning grants is \$75,000 and \$250,000 for working capital grants. Matching resources are required.

The deadline to submit paper applications is July 1, 2016.

For more information contact the Rural Development office at 406-585-2540 or www.rd.usda.gov/mt.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).