

March 2021



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Nebraska FSA State Office Newsletter

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Scott Spilker, *chair*

A Message from the Acting State Executive Director

This month I want to begin my column by wishing you a happy National Ag Week, which this year will be celebrated March 21-27 and is highlighted by National Ag Day on March 23.

This year's celebration takes on special significance because of the coronavirus pandemic and the challenges it has presented over the past year. You, our farmer and rancher customers, have shown an unwavering commitment to providing affordable, safe, and abundant food, fiber, and fuel to the nation and the world, during what has been a year of uncertainty. For that, we offer our thanks to you.

Geoff Ruth
Lonnie Starke
Mark Jagels

Program Chiefs:

Cathy Anderson,
Production/Compliance
Doug Klein,
Conservation/Price Support
Mark Wilke, *Farm Loans*

Patty Wilke, *Administrative
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Bobbie Kriz-Wickham, *Public
Affairs and Outreach*

To find more information
about FSA programming or
contact information for your
local office, go to
www.fsa.usda.gov/ne.

As we round the corner on a year of USDA Service Center operations under the influence of the global pandemic, I want to remind you that FSA and NRCS offices across the state remain open for business, even if walk-in traffic isn't allowed at this time. We've been able to maintain services to our customers using a variety of communication options, including phone, email, and other digital tools. Each Service Center also has devised some kind of physical drop box option. Virtual tools like Box and OneSpan enable the secure online sharing and signing of documents.

While nothing can replace the back and forth conversations over the counter, I think we've all learned a great deal about how to effectively use these alternatives. Please know we are ready for "normal" as much as you are, but in the meantime, remember we are just a phone call away at your USDA Service Center.

That's all for this month. Take care as you focus on spring calving and preparations for planting season.

--Tim Divis

USDA Extends Application Deadline for Quality Loss Adjustment Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has extended the deadline from March 5 to April 9 for agricultural producers to apply for the Quality Loss Adjustment (QLA) Program because of recent winter storms and some clarifications to program rules. This program assists producers who suffered crop quality losses due to qualifying 2018 and 2019 natural disasters.

The QLA program assists producers whose eligible crops suffered quality losses due to qualifying drought, excessive moisture, flooding, hurricanes, snowstorms, tornadoes, typhoons, volcanic activity, or wildfires.

Eligible crops include those for which federal crop insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage is available, except for grazed crops and value loss crops, such as honey, maple sap, aquaculture, floriculture, mushrooms, ginseng root, ornamental nursery, Christmas trees, and turfgrass sod. Additionally, crops that were sold or fed to livestock or that are in storage may be eligible.

Assistance is available in counties that received a Presidential Emergency Disaster Declaration or Secretarial Disaster Designation, or for drought, a county rated by the U.S. Drought monitor as having a D3 (extreme drought) or higher. Producers in counties that did not receive a qualifying declaration or designation may still apply but must also provide supporting documentation.

FSA will issue payments once the application period ends. If the total amount of calculated QLA payments exceeds available program funding, payments will be prorated.

More Information

Information is available at farmers.gov/quality-loss. An informational video on this program can be accessed by [clicking this link](#).

To apply, contact your local [USDA Service Center](#). Producers can also obtain one-on-one support with applications by calling 877-508-8364.

Livestock Inventory Records Important for Disaster Programs

Producers are reminded to keep updated livestock inventory records. These records are necessary in the event of a natural disaster and are an important part of disaster assistance program applications, including applications for the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) and the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP).

When disasters strike, the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) 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.

To be eligible for livestock deaths, producers must submit evidence to support their losses. Some examples of records that could be used to help support a claim include: veterinary records, contemporaneous producer records, veterinary certification existing at the time of the event, balance sheets, brand inspection records, loan records, docking records, bank statements, shearing records, farm credit balance sheets, property tax records, ear tag records, trucking and/or livestock hauling records, sales and purchase receipts, inventory records used for tax purposes, private insurance documents, chattel inspections, and canceled check documentation.

To be eligible for livestock injuries, producers must submit one of the following documents that indicate an injured animal: sales receipt from a livestock auction, sale barn or other similar livestock sales facility; private insurance documents; or processing plant receipt. At a minimum, these records must include livestock kind, type, and weight, and the price for which the animal was sold.

For more information on documentation requirements associated with receiving disaster-related assistance, contact your local FSA office.

Producers Reminded of Impacts Associated with Bringing Native Sod into Production

Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds producers who receive FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or Risk Management Agency (RMA) program benefits that the 2018 Farm Bill contains special provisions related to native sod being brought into production in the states of Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, South Dakota and North Dakota.

Native sod acres brought into production agriculture at any time after December 20, 2018, are subject to the following:

- Reduced guarantee for crop insurance;
- Reduced premium subsidy for crop insurance;
- Reduced guarantee for the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP); and
- Increased service fees for NAP policies involving the native sod acres.

Native sod is considered land on which the plant cover is composed principally of native grasses, grass-like plants, or shrubs for grazing and browsing that has never been tilled, and the producer cannot substantiate that the ground has ever been tilled, for the production of an annual crop on or before December 20, 2018.

For crop insurance, the reductions in guarantee and premium subsidy apply for the first four years which the acres are insured up to 10 crop years after initial tillage. For NAP, reductions in guarantees and increased service fees apply for the first four years in which the acres are covered under a NAP policy up to 10 crop years after initial tillage. The native sod acres are treated as traditional acres for crop insurance once the acreage has been insured for four years, and its treated as traditional acreage for NAP once the acreage has been covered under a NAP policy for four years.

In addition, the 2014 Farm Bill placed similar restrictions on native sod acres that are brought into production between February 7, 2014 and December 20, 2018. Under the 2014 Farm Bill, impacts for crop insurance and NAP are applicable for the first four years of cropping regardless of whether the acreage is insured or covered under a NAP policy.

Producers who have questions on these provisions or any FSA programs should contact their county FSA office.

Environmental Review Required Before Project Implementation

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to consider all potential environmental impacts for federally-funded projects before the project is approved.

For all Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs, an environmental review must be completed before actions are approved, such as site preparation or ground disturbance. These programs include, **but are not limited to**, the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program and farm loans. If project implementation begins before FSA has completed an environmental review, the request will be denied. Although there are exceptions regarding the Stafford Act and emergencies, it's important to wait until you receive written approval of your project proposal before starting any actions.

Applications cannot be approved until FSA has copies of all permits and plans. Contact your local FSA office early in your planning process to determine what level of environmental review is required for your program application so that it can be completed timely.

FSA Offers Farm Storage Facility Loan Options

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

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 exceeding \$100,000 require additional security.

You 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.

For more information, contact the county FSA office or visit fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport.

For March, FSFL interest rates are: 3 year term, 0.250%; 5 year term, 0.500%; 7 year term, 0.875%; 10 year term, 1.125%; and 12 year term, 1.375%.

Cover Crop Guidelines

The Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Risk Management Agency (RMA) have developed a consistent, simple and a flexible policy for cover crop practices.

The termination and reporting guidelines are:

Termination:

The cover crop termination guidelines provide the timeline for terminating cover crops, are based on zones and apply to non-irrigated cropland. To view the zones and additional guidelines visit nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/landuse/crops/ and click "Cover Crop Termination Guidelines."

Reporting:

The intended use of cover only will be used to report cover crops. This includes crops that were terminated by tillage and reported with an intended use code of green manure. An FSA policy change will allow cover crops to be hayed and grazed. Program eligibility for the cover crop that is being hayed or grazed will be determined by each specific program.

If the crop reported as cover only is harvested for any use other than forage or grazing and is not terminated properly, then that crop will no longer be considered a cover crop.

Crops reported with an intended use of cover only will not count toward the total cropland on the farm. In these situations, a subsequent crop will be reported to account for all cropland on the farm.

FSA is Accepting CRP Continuous Enrollment Offers

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is accepting offers for specific conservation practices under the [Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\) Continuous Signup](#).

In exchange for a yearly rental payment, farmers enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and to plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. The program's long-term goal is to re-establish valuable land cover to improve water quality, prevent soil erosion, and reduce loss of wildlife habitat. Contracts for land enrolled in CRP are 10-15 years in length.

Under continuous CRP signup, environmentally sensitive land devoted to certain conservation practices can be enrolled in CRP at any time. Offers for continuous enrollment are not subject to competitive bidding during specific periods. Instead they are automatically accepted provided the land and producer meet certain eligibility requirements and the enrollment levels do not exceed the statutory cap.

For more information, including a list of acceptable practices, contact the nearest county FSA office or visit fsa.usda.gov/crp.

Save Big by Planting Trees on Your Home, Farm

Did you know the cooling effect of a young, healthy tree is the same as having 10 air conditioners operating 20 hours every day? In addition to their cooling power, trees provide other benefits. Trees growing along the banks of rivers and streams keep the soil and nutrients on your land and ensure the water running off is cleaner downstream. These same trees also help prevent floods by slowing down water during periods of heavy rain. As the water slows, it helps recharge underground aquifers that supply fresh water for drinking wells and irrigation.

A native deciduous tree planted in the right location can keep your house or barn temperature regulated. To maximize your energy savings, plant your large deciduous trees on the east, west and northwest of your building. Doing so can help you reduce your air conditioning needs by 30 percent and heating needs by 20-50 percent depending on your location.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service works with farmers and ranchers to plant trees as part of conservation work. For more information, contact your USDA Service Center or visit nrcs.usda.gov, or your local Natural Resources District (NRD) office, who sell trees directly to landowners.

Conservation Agricultural Mentoring Program (CAMP)

The Conservation Agricultural Mentoring Program is a state-driven program that matches an experienced producer who is passionate about conservation with an NRCS field employee that is new to the job or new to the area.

Our goal through the program is to grow critical relationships with the producers we serve, while at the same time advancing employee knowledge of production agriculture and natural resources in their local area, ultimately enhancing our ability to provide excellent customer service.

Once matched with a producer mentor, the employee will go out on the land with them 6-12 times per year for a period of 12-18 months – always during agreed upon times that are convenient for the producer.

Producer mentors provide a safe, low-risk learning environment for employees to advance their knowledge of:

- Common agricultural practices, equipment, inputs and other topics.
- The types of daily challenges and decisions producers face.
- Local resource problems and concerns.
- How producers use conservation practices to address resource concerns.

For more information on the CAMP program, check out our [Fact Sheet](#) and [Frequently Asked Questions](#). Contact your [local CAMP Coordinator](#) to speak with someone directly or to sign-up to become a mentor.

Dates to Remember

April 9, 2021 – Deadline to submit an application for the Quality Loss Adjustment (QLA) Program

June 1, 2021 – 2020 Marketing Assistance Loan availability deadline for corn, dry peas, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, safflower seed, chickpeas, soybeans and sunflower seed

July 15, 2021 – Deadline to report all spring-seeded crops, perennial forage and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage

March FSA Interest Rates

OPERATING/OWNERSHIP

Farm Operating: 1.375%

Microloan Operating: 1.375%

Farm Ownership: 2.750%

Farm Ownership - Joint Financing: 2.5%

Farm Ownership - Down Payment: 1.5%

Emergency - Actual Loss: 2.375%

FARM STORAGE

Farm Storage Facility Loan 3 year term: 0.250%

Farm Storage Facility Loan 5 year term: 0.500%

Farm Storage Facility Loan 7 year term: 0.875%

Farm Storage Facility Loan 10 year term: 1.125%

Farm Storage Facility Loan 12 year term: 1.375%

MARKETING ASSISTANCE

Commodity Loan: 1.125%

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).