January 2020

USDA United States Department of Agriculture

Farm Service Agency Electronic News Service

NEWSLETTER

GovDelivery

Having trouble viewing this email? View it as a Web page.

Oregon FSA Newsletter

Oregon Farm Service Agency

7620 SW Mohawk St.
Tualatin, OR 97062

Phone: 503-692-3688
Fax: 855-824-6185
www.fsa.usda.gov/or

State Executive Director:
Barry Bushue

State Committee:
Anna Sullivan, Chair
Sam Asai, Member
Phil Hassinger, Member
TJ Hansell, Member
Denver Pugh, Member

Oregon FSA 2020 Photo Contest Calendars

The Oregon Farm Service Agency wishes you and your family a very happy and productive new year. The Oregon FSA 2020 Photo Contest calendars are available at Oregon FSA county offices. The state winner photos from the 2018 photo contest were selected by the Oregon State Committee from 197 submitted photos in categories that represent Oregon's agricultural landscape, people in agriculture, a rural workday in agriculture, and agricultural animals and crops.

The calendar is a great way to write-in program deadlines. It also provides general reminders each month, resources available at Farmers.gov, Oregon FSA office locations, and more to “stay connected with USDA”. If you have not received a calendar and would like to have one, please stop by or contact your local county office. To find your local office go to www.fsa.usda.gov/or, or contact the Oregon FSA State Office at 503-404-1125.

Administration:
Martin Nguyen
Administrative Officer

Farm Programs:
Kent Willett, Acting Chief

Farm Loan Programs:
Kathey Brucker, Chief

Next STC Meeting:
February 12, 2020,
Oregon FSA State Office

Sign up for important text message alerts from your local county FSA office! To subscribe, text FSANOW (372-669).

ASKFSA Are you looking for answers to your FSA questions? Then ASK FSA at **askfsa.custhelp.com**.

January Interest Rates

90 Day Treasury Bill: 1.625%
Direct Operating Loans: 2.625%
Farm Ownership and Conservation Loans: 3.250%
Farm Ownership Down Payment: 1.500%
Farm Ownership Joint Financing: 2.500%
Emergency Loans Actual Loss: 3.625%
Farm Storage Facility Loan 3 Year: 1.625%
Farm Storage Facility Loan 5 Year: 1.625%
Farm Storage Facility Loan 7 Year: 1.750%
Farm Storage Facility Loan 10 Year: 1.875%
Farm Storage Facility Loan 12 Year: 1.875%

Important Dates

Feb. 28: General CRP Signup closes; signup for continuous CRP in ongoing.
Jan. 20: Closed for Martin Luther King Jr's Birthday holiday.
Jan. 30: ELAP - Producers who suffer eligible livestock, honeybee, or farm-raised fish losses from Oct. 1, 2018 to Dec. 31, 2019 must file a notice of loss within 30 calendar days after the loss is apparent; an application for payment by Jan. 30, 2020.
Within 15 Days – earlier of (A) when a disaster occurred or damage to the crop or commodity becomes apparent or (B) normal harvest date for reporting a Notice of Loss for NAP*
Within 30 Days – when loss is apparent for reporting a Notice of Loss for LIP and ELAP.
TAP - submit the application either 90 calendar days after the disaster event or the date when the loss is apparent.
Applications accepted for WHIP+, milk loss, and loss of on-farm stored commodities resulting from eligible disaster (into 2020).
March 1: LIP - In addition to filing a LIP notice of loss, producers must also submit a LIP application for payment by March 1, 2020.
March 15: ARC-PLC Program Year 2019 signup ends.
June 30, 2020: ARC-PLC Program Year 2020 signup ends.

USDA Encourages Producers to Consider NAP Risk Protection Coverage Before Crop Sales Deadlines

The Farm Service Agency encourages producers to examine available USDA crop risk protection options, including federal crop insurance and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage, before the applicable crop sales deadline.

Producers are reminded that crops not covered by insurance may be eligible for NAP. Beginning, underserved and limited resource farmers are now eligible for free catastrophic level coverage.

Federal crop insurance covers crop losses from natural adversities such as drought, hail and excessive moisture. NAP covers losses from natural disasters on crops for which no permanent federal crop insurance program is available, including perennial grass forage and grazing crops, fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, bioenergy, and industrial crops.

Producers can determine if crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP by visiting https://webapp.rma.usda.gov/apps/ActuarialInformationBrowser2018/CropCriteria.aspx.

The 2018 Farm Bill reinstates higher levels of coverage, from 50 to 65 percent of expected production in 5 percent increments, at 100 percent of the average market price. Producers of organics and crops marketed directly to consumers also may exercise the "buy-up" option to obtain NAP coverage of 100 percent of the average market price at the coverage levels of between 50 and 65 percent of expected production. NAP basic coverage is available at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production.

For all coverage levels, the NAP service fee is the lesser of $325 per crop or $825 per producer per county, not to exceed a total of $1,950 for a producer with farming interests in multiple counties.

Deadlines for coverage vary by state and crop. To learn more about NAP visit www.fsa.usda.gov/nap or contact your local USDA Service Center. To find your local USDA Service Centers go to http://offices.usda.gov.

Federal crop insurance coverage is sold and delivered solely through private insurance agents. Agent lists are available at all USDA Service Centers or at USDA's online Agent Locator: http://prodwebnlb.rma.usda.gov/apps/AgentLocator/#. Producers can use the USDA Cost Estimator, https://ewebapp.rma.usda.gov/apps/costestimator/Default.aspx, to predict insurance premium costs.

FSA Offers Disaster Assistance for Qualifying Tree, Bush and Vine Losses

Orchardists and nursery tree growers who experience losses from natural disasters during calendar year 2020 must submit a TAP application either 90 calendar days after the disaster event or the date when the loss is apparent. TAP provides financial assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines damaged by natural disasters.

Eligible tree types include trees, bushes or vines that produce an annual crop for commercial purposes. Nursery trees include ornamental, fruit, nut and Christmas trees that are produced for commercial sale. Trees used for pulp or timber are ineligible.

To qualify for TAP, orchardists must suffer a qualifying tree, bush or vine loss in excess of 15 percent mortality from an eligible natural disaster, plus an adjustment for normal mortality. The eligible trees, bushes or vines must have been owned when the natural disaster occurred; however, eligible growers are not required to own the land on which the eligible trees, bushes and vines were planted.

If the TAP application is approved, the eligible trees, bushes and vines must be replaced within 12 months from the date the application is approved. The cumulative total quantity of acres planted to trees, bushes or vines, for which a producer can receive TAP payments, cannot exceed 1,000 acres annually.

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, this will result in a denial of the request. There are exceptions regarding the Stafford Act and emergencies. It is important to wait until you receive written approval of your project proposal before starting any actions, including, but not limited to, vegetation clearing, site preparation or ground disturbance.

Remember to 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.

Applications cannot be approved contingent upon the completion of an environmental review. FSA must have copies of all permits and plans before an application can be approved.

USDA Invites Input on Agricultural Conservation Easement Program Rule

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) seeks public comments on its interim rule for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). ACEP is USDA's premier conservation easement program, helping landowners protect working agricultural lands and wetlands. The rule – now available on the *Federal Register* – takes effect on publication and includes changes to the program prescribed by the 2018 Farm Bill.

"Through easements, agricultural landowners are protecting agricultural lands from development, restoring grazing lands and returning wetlands to their natural conditions," said Jay Gibbs, acting NRCS state conservationist in Oregon. "The new changes to ACEP under the 2018 Farm Bill make it stronger and more effective and will result in even better protection of our nation's farmlands, grasslands and wetlands."

NRCS is investing more than $300 million in conservation easements for fiscal 2020. NRCS state offices will announce signup periods for ACEP in the coming weeks.

Changes to ACEP for agricultural land easements include:

- Authorizing assistance to partners who pursue "Buy-Protect-Sell" transactions.
- Requiring a conservation plan for highly erodible land that will be protected by an agricultural land easement.
- Increasing flexibility for partners to meet cost-share matching requirements.

Changes to ACEP for wetland reserve easements include:

- Identifying water quality as a program purpose for enrollment of wetland reserve easements.
- Expanding wetland types eligible for restoration and management under wetland reserve easements.

"Conservation easements have a tremendous footprint in the U.S. with nearly 5 million acres already enrolled. That's 58,000 square miles," NRCS Chief Matthew Lohr said. "This is a great testament to NRCS's and landowner's commitment to conservation."

Submitting Comments

NRCS invites comments on this interim rule through March 6 on the *Federal Register*. Electronic comments must be submitted through regulations.gov under Docket ID NRCS-2019-0006. All written comments received will be publicly available on regulations.gov, too.

NRCS will evaluate public comments to determine whether additional changes are needed. The agency plans on publishing a final rule following public comment review.

Applying for ACEP

ACEP aids landowners and eligible entities with conserving, restoring and protecting wetlands, productive agricultural lands and grasslands. NRCS accepts ACEP applications year-round, but applications are ranked and funded by enrollment periods that are set locally.

For more information on how to sign up for ACEP, visit your state website at www.or.nrcs.usda.gov or contact your local NRCS field office.

Contact:
Bari Williams, Easement Programs Specialist
bari.williams@usda.gov
Phone: 503.414.3226

Payments to Deceased Producers

In order to claim a Farm Service Agency (FSA) payment on behalf of a deceased producer, all program conditions for the payment must have been met before the applicable producer's date of death.

If a producer earned a FSA payment prior to his or her death, the following is the order of precedence for the representatives of the producer:

- administrator or executor of the estate
- the surviving spouse
- surviving sons and daughters, including adopted children
- surviving father and mother
- surviving brothers and sisters
- heirs of the deceased person who would be entitled to payment according to the State law

In order for FSA to release the payment, the legal representative of the deceased producer must file a form FSA-325, to claim the payment for themselves or an estate. The county office will verify and determine that the application, contract, loan agreement, or other similar form requesting payment issuance, was signed by the applicable deadline for such form, by the deceased or a person legally authorized to act on their behalf at that time of application.

If the application, contract or loan agreement form was signed by someone other than the participant who is deceased, FSA will determine whether the person submitting the form has the legal authority to submit the form to compel FSA to pay the deceased participant.

Payments will be issued to the respective representative's name using the deceased program participant's tax identification number. Payments made to representatives are subject to offset regulations for debts owed by the deceased.

FSA is not responsible for advising persons in obtaining legal advice on how to obtain program benefits that may be due to a participant who has died, disappeared or who has been declared incompetent.

Livestock Losses

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to eligible producers for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by adverse weather, disease and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law.

LIP compensates livestock owners and contract growers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather, including losses due to hurricanes, floods, blizzards, wildfires, extreme heat or extreme cold.

For disease losses, FSA county committees can accept veterinarian certifications that livestock deaths were directly related to adverse weather and unpreventable through good animal husbandry and management.

For 2019 and 2020 livestock losses, eligible livestock owners must file a notice within 30 calendar days of when the loss is first apparent.

Participants must provide the following supporting documentation to their local FSA office no later than 60 calendar days after the end of the calendar year in which the eligible loss condition occurred.

- Proof of death documentation
- Copy of grower's contracts
- Proof of normal mortality documentation

USDA has established normal mortality rates for each type and weight range of eligible livestock, i.e. Adult Beef Cow = 1.5% and Non-Adult Beef Cattle (less than 400 pounds) = 3%. These established percentages reflect losses that are considered expected or typical under "normal" conditions.

In addition to filing a notice of loss, producers must also submit an application for payment by March 1, 2020.

Additional Information about LIP is available at your local FSA office or online at: www.fsa.usda.gov.

Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybee, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)

The Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) provides emergency assistance to eligible livestock, honeybee, and farm-raised fish producers who have losses due to disease, adverse weather or other conditions, such as blizzards and wildfires, not covered by other agricultural disaster assistance programs.

Eligible livestock losses include grazing losses not covered under the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP), loss of purchased feed and/or mechanically harvested feed due to an eligible adverse weather event, additional cost of transporting water because of an eligible drought and additional cost associated with gathering livestock to treat for cattle tick fever.

Eligible honeybee losses include loss of purchased feed due to an eligible adverse weather event, cost of additional feed purchased above normal quantities due to an eligible adverse weather condition, colony losses in excess of normal mortality due to an eligible weather event or loss condition, including CCD, and hive losses due to eligible adverse weather.

Eligible farm-raised fish losses include death losses in excess of normal mortality and/or loss of purchased feed due to an eligible adverse weather event.

Producers who suffer eligible livestock, honeybee, or farm-raised fish losses from Oct. 1, 2018 to Dec. 31, 2019 must file:

- A notice of loss within 30 calendar days after the loss is apparent.
- An application for payment by Jan. 30, 2020

The following ELAP Fact Sheets (by topic) are available online:

- ELAP for Farm-Raised Fish Fact Sheet
- ELAP for Livestock Fact Sheet
- ELAP for Honeybees Fact Sheet

To view these and other FSA program fact sheets, visit the FSA fact sheet web page at www.fsa.usda.gov/factsheets.

Higher Limits Now Available on USDA Farm Loans

Higher limits are now available for borrowers interested in USDA's farm loans, which help agricultural producers purchase farms or cover operating expenses. The 2018 Farm Bill increased the amount that producers can borrow through direct and guaranteed loans available through USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) and made changes to other loans, such as microloans and emergency loans.

Key changes include:

- The Direct Operating Loan limit increased from $300,000 to $400,000, and the Guaranteed Operating Loan limit increased from $ 1.429 million to $1.75 million. Operating loans help producers pay for normal operating expenses, including machinery and equipment, seed, livestock feed, and more.
- The Direct Farm Ownership Loan limit increased from $300,000 to $600,000, and the Guaranteed Farm Ownership Loan limit increased from $1.429 million to $1.75 million. Farm ownership loans help producers become owner-operators of family farms as well as improve and expand current operations.
- Producers can now receive both a $50,000 Farm Ownership Microloan and a $50,000 Operating Microloan. Previously, microloans were limited to a combined $50,000. Microloans provide flexible access to credit for small, beginning, niche, and non-traditional farm operations.
- Producers who previously received debt forgiveness as part of an approved FSA restructuring plan are now eligible to apply for emergency loans. Previously, these producers were ineligible.
- Beginning and socially disadvantaged producers can now receive up to a 95 percent guarantee against the loss of principal and interest on a loan, up from 90 percent.

About Farm Loans

Direct farm loans, which include microloans and emergency loans, are financed and serviced by FSA, while guaranteed farm loans are financed and serviced by commercial lenders. For guaranteed loans, FSA provides a guarantee against possible financial loss of principal and interest.

For more information on FSA farm loans, visit www.fsa.usda.gov or contact your local USDA service center.

Submit Loan Requests for Financing Early

Oregon FSA Farm Loan teams are already working on operating loans for spring 2020 so it is important that potential borrowers submit their requests early so they can be timely processed. The farm loan team can help determine which loan programs are best for applicants.

FSA offers a wide range of low-interest loans that can meet the financial needs of any farm operation for just about any purpose. The traditional **farm operating and farm ownership loans** can help large and small farm operations take advantage of early purchasing discounts for spring inputs as well expenses throughout the year.

Microloans are a simplified loan program that will provide up to $50,000 for both Farm Ownership and Operating Microloans to eligible applicants. These loans, targeted for smaller operations and non-traditional operations, can be used for operating expenses, starting a new agricultural enterprise, purchasing equipment, and other needs associated with a farming operation. The FSA Farm Loan staff can provide more details on farm operating and microloans and provide loan applications. Loans to beginning farmers and members of underserved groups are a priority.

Other types of loans available include:

Marketing Assistance Loans allow producers to use eligible commodities as loan collateral and obtain a 9-month loan while the crop is in storage. These loans provide cash flow to the producer and allow them to market the crop when prices may be more advantageous.

Farm Storage Facility Loans can be used to build permanent structures used to store eligible commodities, or for storage and handling trucks, or portable or permanent handling equipment. A variety of structures are eligible under this loan, including bunker silos, grain bins, hay storage structures and refrigerated structures for vegetables and fruit. A producer may borrow up to $500,000 per loan.

For more information on FSA farm loans, visit www.fsa.usda.gov or contact your local USDA service center.