

2019



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Rhode Island FSA Newsletter

Rhode Island Farm Service Agency

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www.fsa.usda.gov/ri

State Executive Director: W. Michael Sullivan PhD.

State Committee: Doreen Pezza, Ellen Puccetti, David Frerichs, Kevin Breene, Judith Carvalho

The State Committee meets the second Wednesday of every month subject to change.

Rhode Island County Office: 401-828-3120 Option 2.

Message from the State Executive Director

The national deadline for reporting your acreage is Monday July 15th. We understand that many RI producers are behind up to 3 weeks in getting crops in the ground. Neither the State or County Office can change a deadline, but we can approve a process that creates a 'late file register' so that you can report crops after the deadline and still retain your eligibility for programs.

The County and State Committees have requested, and I've approved their request to create the register. I hope you can get your acreage reports in soon, but we've taken the action to assist our RI producers to give you an additional two weeks to report.

The conditions influencing agriculture in 2019 are diverse, challenging and unfolding almost daily. We can anticipate some of the impacts but perhaps not all. If you are facing challenges attributable to the weird and difficult weather and think the County or State Office can assist, please let us know.

We are busy with trying to learn the impacts of the new 2018 Farm Bill rules and regulations a few of us will be attending additional training over the next couple of months. I know these training sessions can't help with the direct impacts of poor weather or adverse impacts on your crops, but significant funds are identified within the Farm Bill that might be able to assist with the impacts on your financial situation.

County Executive Director: Sheryl Michener

County Committee: Kim Coulter, Vincent Confreda, Joseph Polseno, Victor Hoogendoorn

The County Committee meets the first Wednesday of every month subject to change.

Farm Loan Team: 401-828-3120 Option 3.

Farm Loan Officer Trainee: Gene Piskator

Rhode Island youth who have an interest in agriculture are eligible for 'Youth Loans' with discounted interest, modest application procedure that create an opportunity to encourage their interests. These 'Youth Loans' require a parent or guardian signature, a teacher/advisor guide and a working document that serves as a 'business plan'. State and County staff are available to assist any RI person between the ages of 14-20 in the preparation and execution of these programs. We recently did an evening program with RI Farm Bureau and were pleased to see a goodly number of interested young people in attendance. Come join the program and grow RI agriculture's future!

New Dairy Margin Coverage Signup Began June 17

Signup began June 17 for the new [Dairy Margin Coverage](#) (DMC) program, the cornerstone program of the dairy safety net that helps dairy producers manage the volatility of milk and feed prices, operated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency (FSA).

The 2018 Farm Bill allowed USDA to construct the new DMC, which replaces the Margin Protection Program for Dairy (MPP-Dairy). This new program offers protection to dairy producers when the difference between the all-milk price and the average feed cost (the margin) falls below a certain dollar amount selected by the producer.

The program provides coverage retroactive to January 1, 2019, with applicable payments following soon after enrollment. At the time of signup, dairy producers can choose between the \$4.00 to \$9.50 coverage levels. [Learn more about coverage levels and premiums.](#)

The Farm Bill also allows producers who participated in MPP-Dairy from 2014-2017 [to receive a repayment or credit for part of the premiums paid into the program.](#) FSA has been providing premium reimbursements to producers since last month and those that elect the 75 percent credit option will now have that credit applied toward 2019 DMC premiums.

The Department has built in a 50 percent blend of premium and supreme alfalfa hay prices with the alfalfa hay price used under the prior dairy program to provide a total feed cost that more closely aligns with hay rations used by many producers. At a milk margin minus feed cost of \$9.50 or less, payments are possible. With the 50 percent hay blend, FSA's revised April 2019 income over feed cost margin is \$8.82 per hundredweight (cwt). The revised margins for January, February and March are, respectively, \$7.71, \$7.91 and \$8.66 – triggering DMC payments for each month.

DMC payments will be reduced by 6.2 percent in 2019 because of a sequester order required by Congress and issued in accordance with the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985.

DMC offers catastrophic coverage at no cost to the producer, other than an annual \$100 administrative fee. Producers can opt for greater coverage levels for a premium in addition to the administrative fee. Operations owned by limited resource, beginning, socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers and ranchers may be eligible for a waiver on administrative fees. Producers have the choice to lock in coverage levels until 2023 and receive a 25-percent discount on their DMC premiums.

To assist producers in making coverage elections, USDA partnered with the University of Wisconsin to develop a [DMC decision support tool](#), which can be used to evaluate various scenarios using different coverage levels through DMC.

All dairy operations in the United States are eligible for the DMC program. An operation can be run either by a single producer or multiple producers who commercially produce and market cows' milk.

Eligible dairy operations must have a production history determined by FSA. For most operations, production history is based on the highest milk production in 2011, 2012 and 2013. Newer dairy operations have other options for determining production history. Producers may contact their local FSA office to get their verified production history.

Dairy producers also are reminded that 2018 Farm Bill provisions allow for dairy operation to participate in both FSA's DMC program and the Risk Management Agency's [Livestock Gross Margin \(LGM-Dairy\)](#) program. There are also no restrictions from participating in DMC in conjunction with any other RMA insurance products.

For more information, visit [farmers.gov DMC webpage](#) or contact your local USDA service center. To locate your local FSA office, visit [farmers.gov/service-locator](#).

Nominations Open for the 2019 County Committee Elections

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) encourages all farmers, and FSA program participants to take part in the Rhode Island County Committee election nomination process.

FSA's county committees are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA and allow grassroots input and local administration of federal farm programs.

Committees are comprised of locally elected agricultural producers responsible for the fair and equitable administration of FSA farm programs in their counties. Committee members are accountable to the Secretary of Agriculture. If elected, members become part of a local decision making and farm program delivery process.

A county committee is composed of three to 11 elected members from local administrative areas (LAA). Each member serves a three-year term. One-third of the seats on these committees are open for election each year.

This year (**2019**), the following local administrative areas (LAA's) are up for County Committee Elections for Rhode Island;

LAA-5: Bristol County

LAA-2: Kent County

LAA-4: Newport County

Producers may nominate themselves or others as candidates. Organizations representing minority and women farmers may also nominate candidates. To become a nominee, eligible individuals must sign form [FSA-669A](#).

County committees may have an appointed advisor to further represent the local interests of underserved farmers and ranchers. Underserved producers are beginning, women and other minority farmers and ranchers and landowners and/or operators who have limited resources.

All nomination forms for the 2019 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA service center by Aug. 1, 2019. For more information on FSA county committee elections and appointments, refer to the FSA fact sheet: *Eligibility to Vote and Hold Office as a COC Member* available online at: fsa.usda.gov/elections.

New Improvement to Streamline Crop Reporting

Farmers filing crop acreage reports with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and participating insurance providers approved by the Risk Management Agency (RMA) now can provide the common information from their acreage reports at one office and the information will be electronically shared with the other location.

This new process is part of the USDA Acreage Crop Reporting Streamlining Initiative (ACRSI). This interagency collaboration also includes participating private crop insurance agents and insurance companies, all working to streamline the information collected from farmers and ranchers who participate in USDA programs.

Once filing at one location, data that's important to both FSA and RMA will be securely and electronically shared with the other location avoiding redundant and duplicative reporting, as well as saving farmers and ranchers time.

Producers must still visit both their local FSA office and their insurance provider to validate and sign acreage reports, complete maps, or provide program-specific information, including reporting

uninsured crops to FSA. The common data from the first-filed acreage report will now be available to pre-populate and accelerate completion of the second report.

USDA has been working to streamline the crop reporting process for agricultural producers, who have expressed concerns with providing the same basic common information for multiple locations. In 2013, USDA consolidated the deadlines to 15 dates for submitting these reports, down from the previous 54 dates at RMA and 17 dates for FSA. USDA representatives believe farmers and ranchers will experience a notable improvement in the coming weeks as they approach the peak season for crop reporting later this summer.

More than 93 percent of all annual reported acres to FSA and RMA now are eligible for the common data reporting, and USDA is exploring adding more crops. Plans are underway at USDA to continue building upon the framework with additional efficiencies at a future date.

Farmers and ranchers are also reminded that they can now access their FSA farm information from the convenience of their home computer. Producers can see field boundaries, images of the farm, conservation status, operator and owner information and much more.

The new customer self-service portal, known as **FSAFarm+**, gives farmers online access to securely view, print or export their personal farm data. To enroll in the online service, producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office for details. To find a local FSA office in your area, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

2019 Acreage Reporting Dates

In order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements, all producers are encouraged to visit their local FSA office to file an accurate crop certification report by the applicable deadline.

Acreage Reporting Deadlines for Rhode Island are as follows;

- July 15, 2019, Annual, Grass, Mixed Forage, Alfalfa, Fruit and Nut Trees and Perennial Crops and Perennial Forage (except Apples, Cranberries and Peaches). *Late file register for 2019 Acreage Report filing has been approved for Rhode Island as mentioned in State Executive Directors message above for these eligible crops only.*
- September 30, 2019, Value Loss Crops such as Aquaculture, Floriculture, Turfgrass sod, Christmas Trees
- January 2, 2020, Honey (beehive colonies) and Maple Sap
- January 15, 2020, Apples Cranberries and Peaches

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 calendars 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.

USDA Packages Disaster Protection with Loans to Benefit Specialty Crop and Diversified Producers

Producers who apply for FSA farm loans will be offered the opportunity to enroll in the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP). NAP is available to producers who grow noninsurable crops, and is especially important to fruit and vegetable producers and other specialty crop growers.

New, underserved and limited income specialty growers who apply for farm loans could qualify for basic loss coverage at no cost.

The basic disaster coverage protects at 55 percent of the market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of production. Covered crops include “specialty” crops, for instance, vegetables, fruits, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, hay, forage, grazing and energy crops. FSA allows beginning, underserved or limited income producers to obtain NAP coverage up to 90 days after the normal application closing date when they also apply for FSA credit.

Producers also may work with FSA to protect value-added production, such as organic or direct market crops, at their fair market value in those markets. Targeted underserved groups eligible for free or discounted coverage are American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, and women.

FSA offers a variety of loan products, including farm ownership loans, operating loans and microloans that have a streamlined application process.

Growers need not apply for an FSA loan, nor be a beginning, limited resource, or underserved farmer, to be eligible for Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program assistance. To learn more, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/nap or www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans, or contact your local FSA office at <https://offices.usda.gov>.

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).