

July 2020



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

# NEWSLETTER

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## Rhode Island FSA Newsletter

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### Rhode Island Farm Service Agency

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Warwick, RI 02886

Phone: 401-828-3120 Option 1.

[www.fsa.usda.gov/ri](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ri)

**State Executive Director:** W. Michael Sullivan, PhD.

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

The State Committee Meets the second Tuesday of every month subject to change.

**RI County Office Suite 49**

**Phone:** 401-828-3120 Option 2.

### Message from the State Executive Director

Welcome to the continuing new world we are facing. Social distancing, masking and dry chapped hands from regular washing and trying to make life for our families and farms healthy and valued are now normal. The FSA family is working hard to implement and 'fit' to Rhode Island the USDA programs developed in Washington with focus on the many of the agricultural crops and programs important outside Rhode Island region.

The Coronavirus Food Production Act has provided some assistance to dairies, beef, hay and corn producers in RI. The request for inclusion of turfgrass sod, wineries and agritourism is pending. The oyster farmers will eventually see small assistance from funds passed through DEM once they finish rules.

The changing environment that closed schools, business parks, universities has created a 'feed' problem for many of our pork producers who relied on recovery of scraps and waste for a significant part of their animals diet has proved a challenge. The normal feed assistance programs that are part of USDA's ongoing efforts are linked to environmental triggers to initiate actions. We are asking Washington to consider these situations as an adequate documentation of need to help our RI pork producers.

Our significant reliance on agritourism is not yet address in any formal program. Funds made available to the State might be made available to assist producers with the economic impacts but these

County Executive Director:  
Sheryl Michener

decisions will be made at the Statehouse level on how the distributed aide might be effectively distributed.

**County Committee:** George Goulart Jr., Kim Coulter, John Sousa, Gilbert Rathbun Jr., Joseph Polseno

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

### RI Farm Loan Team Suite 49

**Phone:** 401-828-3120 Option 3.

**Farm Loan Analyst:** Patricia Sullivan

### Dates to Remember:

**July 15th,** Acreage Reporting Deadline for Annual, Grass, Mixed Forage, Alfalfa, Fruit and Nut Trees and Perennial Crops and Perennial Forage (except Apples, Cranberries and Peaches).

**August 1st,** Last day to file nomination forms at the local USDA Service Center for Washington County. *Since Aug. 1 falls on a weekend this year, nomination forms will be accepted through Aug. 3, 2020.*

**August 28th,** Final day to submit applications for CFAP.

**September 1st,** Last day to insure your value loss crops under the Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)

Traditional work activities continue on the farm and in our USDA agencies. The County Office staff are working diligently to see that all producers who might benefit from registering under the acreage reporting tool ARC/PLC are contacted and given the opportunity. Some of us have been trying to make farm visits to get these signatures while your busy making hay, planting, cultivating and feeding families and our State. Much of our first cut hay is safely stored and by all reports it's been a pretty good crop. The drying weather was largely excellent but now we have an increasing need for rain.

FSA has some very attractive loan rates right now for farm storage systems where a building and associated equipment for handling and even trucking might be eligible. If you have a potential project reach out to Pat Sullivan our new Farm Loan Analyst for information.

We are here to serve and assist. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to reach out and ask. Our FSA staff will be ready and willing to assist. You and your families remain in our minds and thoughts as we travel through these times.

*Michael Sullivan, PhD.*

*Rhode Island State Executive Director*

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## USDA Reminds Producers to Complete Crop Acreage Reports

Agricultural producers in Rhode Island must complete [crop acreage reports](#) by the **July 15th deadline**. The July 15th deadline applies to Annual, Grass, Mixed Forage, Alfalfa, Fruit and Nut Trees and Perennial Crops and Perennial Forage (except Apples, Cranberries and Peaches).

Due to the pandemic, FSA has implemented acreage reporting flexibilities. To complete your acreage report, please call the Rhode Island County FSA office to schedule an appointment. FSA can work with producers to file timely acreage reports by phone, email, online tools and virtual meetings as well as by appointment in person.

After completed maps and all acreage reporting information is received, FSA will make software updates and send producers the completed *Report of Acreage* form (FSA-578) to sign. Producers must return the signed form certifying their acreage report to the FSA office through [mail, email, or Box].

The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the acreage reporting date, the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer has not timely filed an acreage report, the producer may file the acreage report within 30 days of the acreage reporting date. Because of the pandemic, late fees will be waived if filed within the 30 days.

Applications can also be submitted for the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus for 2018 and 2019 as well as other disaster assistance programs that may be able to assist producers at this time.

When producers are working with FSA staff – either in-person or virtually – they can also take care of applications for other FSA programs, including the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program. A CFAP Call Center is available for producers who would like additional one-on-one support with the CFAP application process. Please call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance. The CFAP Call Center can provide service to non-English speaking customers. Customers will select 1 for English and 2 to speak with a Spanish speaking employee. For other languages, customers select 1 and indicate their language to the Call Center staff.

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.

FSA is also providing additional flexibilities for producers to file on acres with failed crops or crops that were prevented from planting because of extreme weather events. For insured crops, producers who timely filed a prevented planted claim with the reinsurance company but filed a *Notice of Loss* (CCC-576) form after the deadline will be considered timely filed for FSA purposes. For uninsured crops, producers may start a *Notice of Loss* by calling their FSA county office.

For questions, Contact the Rhode Island County Office at 401-828-3120 Option 2. or visit [farmers.gov/crop-acreage-reports](https://farmers.gov/crop-acreage-reports).

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## **May Margin Triggers Dairy Margin Coverage Program Payment**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency (FSA) today announced that the May 2020 income over feed cost margin was \$5.37 per hundredweight (cwt.), triggering the third payment of 2020 for dairy producers who purchased the appropriate level of coverage under the [Dairy Margin Coverage](#) (DMC) program.

To date, FSA has issued more than \$176 million in program benefits to dairy producers who purchased DMC coverage for 2020.

Authorized by the 2018 Farm Bill, DMC is a voluntary risk management program that offers protection to dairy producers when the difference between the all-milk price and the average feed price (the margin) falls below a certain dollar amount selected by the producer. Over 13,000 operations enrolled in the program for the 2020 calendar year.

Although DMC enrollment for 2020 coverage has closed, signup for 2021 coverage will begin October 13 and will run through December 11, 2020.

All USDA Service Centers are open for business, including some that are open to visitors to conduct business in person by appointment only. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, or any other Service Center agency should call ahead and schedule an appointment. Service Centers that are open for appointments will pre-screen visitors based on health concerns or recent travel and visitors must adhere to social distancing guidelines. Visitors may also be required to wear a face covering during their appointment. Field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. Our program delivery staff will be in the office, and they will be working with our producers in office, by phone, and using online tools. More information can be found at [farmers.gov/coronavirus](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus).

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

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## USDA Issues First Coronavirus Food Assistance Program Payments

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue today announced the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) has already approved more than \$545 million in payments to producers who have applied for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program. FSA began taking applications May 26, and the agency has received over 86,000 applications for this important relief program.

In the first six days of the application period, FSA has already made payments to more than 35,000 producers. Out of the gate, the top five states for CFAP payments are Illinois, Kansas, Wisconsin,

Nebraska, and South Dakota. USDA has released data on application progress and program payments and will release further updates each Monday at 2:00pm ET. The report can be viewed at [farmers.gov/cfap](https://farmers.gov/cfap).

FSA will accept applications through August 28, 2020. Through CFAP, USDA is making available \$16 billion in financial assistance to producers of agricultural commodities who have suffered a five-percent-or-greater price decline due to COVID-19 and face additional significant marketing costs as a result of lower demand, surplus production, and disruptions to shipping patterns and the orderly marketing of commodities.

In order to do this, producers will receive 80 percent of their maximum total payment upon approval of the application. The remaining portion of the payment, not to exceed the payment limit, will be paid at a later date nationwide, as funds remain available.

### **Getting Help from FSA**

New customers seeking one-on-one support with the CFAP application process can call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer general assistance. This is a recommended first step before a producer engages the team at the FSA county office at their local USDA Service Center.

Producers can download the CFAP application and other eligibility forms from [farmers.gov/cfap](https://farmers.gov/cfap). Also, on that webpage, producers can find a payment calculator to help producers identify sales and inventory records needed to apply and calculate potential payments. Producers self-certify their records when applying for CFAP and that documentation is not submitted with the application. However, producers may be asked for their documentation to support the certification of eligible commodities, so producers should retain the information used to complete their application.

Those who use the online calculator tool will be able to print a pre-filled CFAP application, sign it, and submit it to your local FSA office either electronically or via hand delivery through an office drop box. Please contact your local office to determine the preferred delivery method for your local office. Team members at FSA county offices will be able to answer detailed questions and help producers apply quickly and efficiently through phone and online tools. Find contact information for your local office at [farmers.gov/cfap](https://farmers.gov/cfap).

### **Policy Clarifications**

FSA has been working with stakeholder groups to provide further clarification to producers on the CFAP program. For example, the agency has published a matrix of common marketing contracts that impact eligibility for non-specialty crops and has provided a table that crosswalks common livestock terms to CFAP cattle categories. Updated information can be found in the frequently asked questions section of the CFAP website.

### **More Information**

To find the latest information on CFAP, visit [farmers.gov/CFAP](https://farmers.gov/CFAP) or call 877-508-8364.

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## FSA Implements Set-Aside Loan Provision for Customers Impacted by COVID-19

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will broaden the use of the Disaster Set-Aside (DSA) loan provision, normally used in the wake of natural disasters, to allow farmers with USDA farm loans who are affected by COVID-19, and are determined eligible, to have their next payment set aside. In some cases, FSA may also set aside a second payment for farmers who have already had one payment set aside because of a prior designated disaster.

FSA direct loan borrowers will receive a letter with the details of the expanded Disaster Set-Aside authorities, which includes the possible set-aside of annual operating loans, as well as explanations of the additional loan servicing options that are available. To discuss or request a loan payment Set-Aside, borrowers should call or email the farm loan staff at their local FSA county office.

The set-aside payment's due date is moved to the final maturity date of the loan or extended up to twelve months in the case of an annual operating loan. Any principal set-aside will continue to accrue interest until it is repaid. This aims to improve the borrower's cashflow in the current production cycle.

FSA previously announced it was relaxing the loan-making process and adding flexibilities for servicing direct and guaranteed loans to provide credit to producers in need. Direct loan applicants and borrowers are encouraged to contact their local FSA county office to discuss loan making and servicing flexibilities and other needs or concerns. Customers participating in FSA's guaranteed loan programs are encouraged to contact their lender. Information on these flexibilities, and office contact information, can be found on [farmers.gov/coronavirus](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus).

FSA will be accepting most forms and applications by facsimile or electronic signature. Some services are also available online to customers with an eAuth account, which provides access to the [farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov) portal where producers can view USDA farm loan information and certain program applications and payments. Customers can track payments, report completed practices, request conservation assistance and electronically sign documents. Customers who do not already have an eAuth account can enroll at [farmers.gov/sign-in](https://farmers.gov/sign-in).

USDA Service Centers are open for business by phone appointment only, and field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. While program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with producers by phone and using online tools whenever possible. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other Service Center agency are required to call their Service Center to schedule a phone appointment. More information can be found at [farmers.gov/coronavirus](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus).

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## USDA Announces Improvements to Forage Seeding and Forage Production Crop Insurance Provisions for the 2021 Crop Year

USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) announced changes to the Forage Seeding and Forage Production crop insurance programs starting with the 2021 crop year. Changes include expanding

coverage to new regions and counties, expanding coverage to fall-planted forage and changing the method for loss adjustment.

Specifically, the changes:

- Establish coverage of forage seeding for producers in 186 more counties.
- Expand coverage to fall-planted forage and align forage seeding cancellation and termination dates with the dates for other fall planted crops in each state.
- Revise loss-adjustment procedures to rely upon the number of live alfalfa stems rather than the number of live plants for making loss determinations for forage containing more than 60 percent alfalfa.

These changes are further described in a final rule, now available on the *Federal Register* at [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov). Interested parties are invited to comment on the rule for 60 days.

These changes take effect for crop year 2021 with policies that have a contract change date of April 30, 2020, or later. Sales closing dates follow the contract change date and vary across the country. You should contact your crop insurance agent for their specific sales closing date. Crop years reflect the normal growing season and are identified by the year of harvest.

Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available online using the RMA [Agent Locator](https://www.rma.usda.gov/agentlocator). Learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at [rma.usda.gov](https://rma.usda.gov).

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