

In This Issue:

- [Dates To Remember](#)
- [WI FSA Offers Lenders an Opportunity to Participate in Virtual Training Event](#)
- [Enrollment Continues for Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs for 2021](#)
- [Current FSA Loan Interest Rates](#)
- [USDA Offers New Forest Management Incentive for Conservation Reserve Program](#)
- [USDA Temporarily Suspends Debt Collections, Foreclosures and Other Activities on Farm Loans for Several Thousand Distressed Borrowers Due to Coronavirus](#)
- [NRCS Wisconsin Announces Deadline for 2021 Wetland Reserve and Agricultural Land Easement Programs](#)
- [Quality Loss Assistance Now Available for Eligible Producers Affected by 2018, 2019 Natural Disasters](#)

Dates To Remember

February 12, 2021: General Signup Deadline for [CRP](#) Program

February 15, 2021: USDA Service Centers closed in observance of Washington's Birthday.

March 1, 2021: Final Deadline to Submit Application for Payment for 2020 losses for [LIP](#) Program

March 5, 2021: Final Deadline to Submit Application for Payment for 2018 and 2019 losses under the [QLA](#) Program

March 15, 2021: [ARC/PLC](#) Program Signup Deadline

March 15, 2021: Final Deadline for all Spring-seeded annual crops for [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#)

March 31, 2021: Marketing Assistance Loan deadline for prior year harvested wheat, barley, canola, crambe, flaxseed, honey, oats, rapeseed, and sesame

WI FSA Offers Lenders an Opportunity to Participate in Virtual Training Event

The Wisconsin Farm Service Agency is again offering lenders an opportunity to participate in a live training event. The training will be geared towards lenders looking to better understand the USDA Farm Service Agency Guaranteed Loan Program. Participants will learn how to successfully use the program to benefit their customers and lending institutions.

In a change from previous lender trainings, this year's meetings will be held **virtually**, through Microsoft Teams. We will be holding two sessions, the first one comprised of an overview of the guarantee program and loan making requirements, with the second covering loan servicing and loan resolution. Each session is scheduled to begin at 9:00 a.m. and will conclude by 12:00 pm.

February 18, 2021 (Thursday)

Program Overview, Loan Making, Eligibility, Application Processing, Microsoft Teams meeting

Join on your computer or mobile app

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Or call in (audio only)

+1 636-352-2946, 691929025#

February 25, 2021 (Thursday)

General Loan Servicing, Bankruptcy, Liquidation, Loss Claims Microsoft Teams meeting

Join on your computer or mobile app

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Or call in (audio only)

+1 636-352-2946, 2733115#

There is no need to pre-register for the event. Participants can attend the training by clicking on the appropriate link above and join through either the Teams app or their web browser.

Training materials will be provided through the Teams link. The meetings will be recorded for those unable to attend.

If you have any questions regarding the training, please contact Tom Brandt at tom.brandt@usda.gov or 608-662-4422 ext. 103 or Dan O'Brien at daniel.obrien2@usda.gov or 608-325-4195 ext. 125

Enrollment Continues for Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs for 2021

Agricultural producers can now make elections and enroll in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for the 2021 crop year. The signup period opened Tuesday, Oct. 13. These key U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) safety-net programs help producers weather fluctuations in either revenue or price for certain crops, and more than \$5 billion in payments are in the process of going out to producers who signed up for the 2019 crop year.

Enrollment for the 2021 crop year closes March 15, 2021.

ARC provides income support payments on historical base acres when actual crop revenue declines below a specified guaranteed level. PLC provides income support payments on historical base acres when the effective price for a covered commodity falls below its reference price.

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 and short grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

2021 Elections and Enrollment

Producers can elect coverage and enroll in crop-by-crop ARC-County or PLC, or ARC-Individual for the entire farm, for the 2021 crop year. Although election changes for 2021 are optional, enrollment (signed contract) is required for each year of the program. If a producer has a multi-year contract on the farm and makes an election change for 2021, it will be necessary to sign a new contract.

If an election is not submitted by the deadline of March 15, 2021, the election defaults to the current election for crops on the farm from the prior crop year.

For crop years 2022 and 2023, producers will have an opportunity to make new elections during those signups. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the farm.

Current FSA Loan Interest Rates

Current program interest rates as of February 1, 2021.

Farm Loan Interest Rates:

Farm Operating - Direct	1.375%
Farm Operating - Microloan	1.375%
Farm Ownership - Direct	2.625%

Farm Ownership - Microloan	2.625%
Farm Ownership - Direct, Joint Financing	2.500%
Farm Ownership - Down Payment	1.500%
Emergency - Amount of Actual Loss	2.375%

Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFL):

3-year FSFL	0.250%
5-year FSFL	0.375%
7-year FSFL	0.750%
10-year FSFL	1.000%
12-year FSFL	1.125%

Please visit the [Farm Loan Program](#) webpage for more information.

USDA Offers New Forest Management Incentive for Conservation Reserve Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is making available \$12 million to forest landowners enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) who want to implement healthy forest management practices. Producers can now sign up for the Forest Management Incentive (FMI), which provides incentives to landowners with land in CRP to encourage proper tree thinning and other practices.

Right now, less than 10% of land currently enrolled in CRP is dedicated to forestland. But these nearly 2 million acres of CRP forestland, if properly managed, can have enormous benefits for natural resources by reducing soil erosion, protecting water quality, increasing water quantity and diversifying local farm operations and rural economies.

Only landowners and agricultural producers with active CRP contracts involving forest cover can enroll. This does not include active CRP contracts that expire within two years. Existing CRP participants interested in tree thinning and prescribed burning must comply with the standards and specifications established in their CRP contract.

CRP participants receive the incentive payment once tree thinning and other authorized forest management practices are completed.

The incentive payment is the lower of these two options:

- The actual cost of completing the practice; or
- 75% of the payment rate offered by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), if the practice is offered through NRCS conservation programs.

More Information

CRP sign up began January 19, 2021. FSA will announce deadline later this year. Interested producers should contact their [local FSA county office](#).

USDA Temporarily Suspends Debt Collections, Foreclosures and Other Activities on Farm Loans for Several Thousand Distressed Borrowers Due to Coronavirus

Due to the national public health emergency caused by coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), the U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced the temporary suspension of past-due debt collections and foreclosures for distressed borrowers under the Farm Storage Facility Loan and the Direct Farm Loan programs administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

USDA will temporarily suspend non-judicial foreclosures, debt offsets or wage garnishments, and referring foreclosures to the Department of Justice. USDA will work with the U.S. Attorney's Office to stop judicial foreclosures and evictions on accounts that were previously referred to the Department of Justice. Additionally, USDA has extended deadlines for producers to respond to loan servicing actions, including loan deferral consideration for financially distressed and delinquent borrowers. In addition, for the Guaranteed Loan program, flexibilities have been made available to lenders to assist in servicing their customers.

Today's announcement by USDA expands previous actions undertaken by the Department to lessen financial hardship. According to USDA data, more than 12,000 borrowers—approximately 10% of all borrowers—are eligible for the relief announced today. Overall, FSA lends to more than 129,000 farmers, ranchers and producers.

The temporary suspension is in place until further notice and is expected to continue while the national COVID-19 disaster declaration is in place.

USDA's Farm Service Agency provides several different loans for producers, which fall under two main categories:

- Guaranteed loans are made and serviced by commercial lenders, such as banks, the Farm Credit System, credit unions and other non-traditional lenders. FSA guarantees the lender's loan against loss, up to 95%.
- Direct loans are made and serviced by FSA using funds from the federal government.

The most common loan types are Farm Ownership, Farm Operating and Farm Storage Facility Loans, with Microloans for each:

- Farm Ownership: Helps producers purchase or enlarge a farm or ranch, construct a new or improve an existing farm or ranch building, pay closing costs and pay for soil and water conservation and protection.
- Farm Operating: Helps producers purchase livestock and equipment and pay for minor real estate repairs and annual operating expenses.

- Farm Storage Facility Loans are made directly to producers for the construction of cold or dry storage and includes handling equipment and mobile storage such as refrigerated trucks.
- Microloans: Direct Farm Ownership, Operating Loans and Farm Storage Facility Loans have a shortened application process and reduced paperwork designed to meet the needs of smaller, non-traditional and niche-type operations.

Contact FSA

FSA encourages producers to contact their county office to discuss these programs and temporary changes to farm loan deadlines and the loan servicing options available. For Service Center contact information, visit farmers.gov/coronavirus. For servicing information, access farmers.gov.

NRCS Wisconsin Announces Deadline for 2021 Wetland Reserve and Agricultural Land Easement Programs

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Wisconsin has announced the fiscal year 2021 signup deadline is February 5, 2021, for [Wetland Reserve Easement](#) (WRE) and [Agricultural Land Easement](#) (ALE) applications. The 2018 Farm Bill has provided NRCS with technical and financial assistance to help private landowners, tribes, land trusts and other groups protect these valuable lands.

The [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program](#) (ACEP) umbrella focuses on restoring and protecting wetlands as well as conserving productive agricultural lands and grasslands. The WRE component provides landowners compensation for enrolling their land in easements. The ALE component works with eligible partners to protect agricultural use and conservation values of eligible land.

Applications for WRE and ALE are taken on a continuous basis and they are ranked and considered for funding one time a year. Landowners who have applied for WRE and partners who have applied for ALE in the past need not apply again but may be asked to update their application documents. "There may be other funding opportunities for WRE later in the year. If you do not get an application in by February 5, you may still submit one during the summer. We will consider those applications for funding in the 2022 fiscal year, which begins in October 2021," said Greg Kidd, Assistant State Conservationist for Easements.

Wetland Reserve Easements

Through ACEP-WRE, NRCS helps landowners and tribes to restore and protect wetland ecosystems. WREs are either permanent or for 30 years in length. Eligible lands include land that is drained and can successfully be restored and riparian areas that link protected

wetland areas. As part of the easement, NRCS and the landowner work together to develop a plan for the restoration and maintenance of the wetland.

Agricultural Land Easements

Through ACEP-ALE, NRCS works with eligible partners who purchase Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) that protect the agricultural use and conservation values of eligible land. ALEs can help farmers and ranchers keep their land in agriculture. The program also protects grazing land by conserving grassland, rangeland, pastureland and shrubland. Eligible partners include Indian tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations, such as Land Trusts that have farmland or grassland protection programs.

Please note that NRCS does not require ACEP applicants to visit USDA Service Centers in person. Landowners can start their WRE applications by phone or online and follow up by mail or online. If the land qualifies, additional documentation such as an ownership deed and Farm Service Agency information will be required.

Online services are available to customers with an eAuth account, which provides access to the farmers.gov portal where producers can view USDA farm loan information and payments and view and track certain USDA program applications and payments. An eAuthentication account is a way for you to interact with USDA websites online. It gives you the ability to identify yourself to the USDA via your User ID and password. It permits you to access a wide range of USDA applications across the many USDA agencies and their services. Customers who do not already have an eAuth account can enroll at www.farmers.gov/sign-in.

Landowners and tribes interested in Wetland Reserve Easements should contact their [local USDA Service Center](#) to get started. For more information, read our brochure featuring the long-term benefits of healthy wetlands, including descriptions of each program, pictures from restorations across the state, featured landowners, partnership highlights, and more [here](#).

Quality Loss Assistance Now Available for Eligible Producers Affected by 2018, 2019 Natural Disasters

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that signup for the Quality Loss Adjustment (QLA) Program began Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2021. Funded by the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2020, this new program provides assistance to producers who suffered eligible crop quality losses due to natural disasters occurring in 2018 and 2019. The deadline to apply for QLA is Friday, March 5, 2021.

Eligible Crops

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; however, crops that were destroyed before harvest are not eligible. Crop quality losses occurring after harvest, due to deterioration in storage, or that could have been mitigated, are also not eligible.

Assistance is based on a producer's harvested affected production of an eligible crop, which must have had at least a 5% quality loss reflected through a quality discount; or for forage crops, a nutrient loss, such as total digestible nutrients.

Qualifying Disaster Events

Losses must have been a result of a qualifying disaster event (hurricane, excessive moisture, flood, qualifying drought, tornado, typhoon, volcanic activity, snowstorm, or wildfire) or related condition that occurred in calendar years 2018 and/or 2019.

Assistance is available for eligible producers in counties that received a qualifying Presidential Emergency Disaster Declaration or Secretarial Disaster Designation because of one or more of the qualifying disaster events or related conditions.

Lists of counties with Presidential Emergency Disaster Declarations and Secretarial Disaster Designations for all qualifying disaster events for 2018 and 2019 are available [here](#). For drought, producers are eligible for QLA if the loss occurred in an area within a county rated by the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#) as having a D3 (extreme drought) or higher intensity level during 2018 or 2019.

Producers in counties that did not receive a qualifying declaration or designation may still apply but must also provide supporting documentation to establish that the crop was directly affected by a qualifying disaster event.

To determine QLA eligibility and payments, FSA considers the total quality loss caused by all qualifying natural disasters in cases where a crop was impacted by multiple events.

Applying for QLA

When applying, producers are asked to provide verifiable documentation to support claims of quality loss or nutrient loss in the case of forage crops. For crops that have been sold, grading must have been completed within 30 days of harvest, and for forage crops, a laboratory analysis must have been completed within 30 days of harvest.

Some acceptable forms of documentation include sales receipts from buyers, settlement sheets, truck or warehouse scale tickets, written sales contracts, similar records that represent actual and specific quality loss information, and forage tests for nutritional values.

Payments Calculations and Limitations

QLA payments are based on formulas for the type of crop (forage or non-forage) and loss documentation submitted. Based on this documentation FSA is calculating payments

based on the producer's own individual loss or based on the county average loss. More information on payments can be found on farmers.gov/quality-loss.

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.

For each crop year, 2018, 2019 and 2020, the maximum amount that a person or legal entity may receive, directly or indirectly, is \$125,000. Payments made to a joint operation (including a general partnership or joint venture) will not exceed \$125,000, multiplied by the number of persons and legal entities that comprise the ownership of the joint operation. A person or legal entity is ineligible for QLA payment if the person's or legal entity's average Adjusted Gross Income exceeds \$900,000, unless at least 75% is derived from farming, ranching or forestry-related activities.

Future Insurance Coverage Requirements

All producers receiving QLA Program payments are required to purchase crop insurance or NAP coverage for the next two available crop years at the 60% coverage level or higher. Wildlife and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus (WHIP+) participants who already met the WHIP+ requirement to purchase crop insurance or NAP coverage are considered to have thereby met the requirement to purchase crop insurance or NAP coverage for QLA. If eligible, QLA participants may meet the insurance purchase requirement by purchasing [Whole-Farm Revenue Protection](#) coverage offered through USDA's Risk Management Agency.

More Information

For more information, visit farmers.gov/quality-loss, or contact your local [USDA Service Center](#). Producers can also obtain one-on-one support with applications by calling 877-508-8364.

Wisconsin Farm Service Agency

8030 Excelsior Drive
Suite 100
Madison, WI 53717

Phone: 608-662-4422

Acting State Executive Director

Tyler Radke

Farm Loan Chief

Tom Brandt

Farm Program Chief

Greg Biba

Farm Program Chief

John Palmer

State Committee:
Lisa Condon, Chair
Thomas Gillis
David Heideman
Tom McClellan