

June 2015



June Topics

- [Virginia CREP Re-Enrollment](#)
- [Secretary Vilsack Announces Additional 800,000 Acres Dedicated to Conservation Reserve Program for Wildlife Habitat and Wetlands](#)
- [Producers Must Report Prevented Planting and Failed Acres](#)
- [2015 Acreage Reporting Dates](#)
- [Filing a Notice of Loss](#)
- [ARC, PLC and CTAP Acreage Maintenance](#)
- [USDA Announces New Support for Beginning Farmers](#)
- [USDA Announces Changes to Fruit, Vegetable and Wild Rice Planting Rules](#)
- [Agricultural Producers in Virginia Still Have Time to Apply for Direct Farm Ownership Loan Program](#)
- [Guaranteed Loan Program](#)
- [Selected Interest Rates for June 2015](#)

Virginia Farm Service Agency News

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Monday - Friday

Virginia CREP Re-Enrollment

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) help Virginia farmers and landowners by protecting and restoring natural resources, by enhancing the rural landscape, and by providing substantial economic benefits.

Currently, there are more than 50,000 acres in Virginia enrolled in the programs. However, on September 30, 2015, agreements involving over 8,000 acres in CRP and CREP are scheduled to expire.

CRP and CREP participants who have expiring contracts may now offer to re-enroll 'continuous' contracts.

The deadline to submit an offer for continuous CRP/CREP re-

7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

enrollment is August 1, 2015.

State Office Staff

Pete Adamson, Chief
Farm Loans

The re-enrolled contract must be approved prior to September 30, 2015. The new agreement becomes effective on October 1, 2015.

Brent L. Whitlock, Chief
Farm Programs

Visit your local FSA office soon and allow the FSA staff to help you determine your options!

Connie Washburn-Marsh,
Chief Administration Officer

Secretary Vilsack Announces Additional 800,000 Acres Dedicated to Conservation Reserve Program for Wildlife Habitat and Wetlands

Secretary Hails Program's 30th Anniversary, Announces General Signup Period

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced today that an additional 800,000 acres of highly environmentally sensitive land may be enrolled in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) under certain wetland and wildlife initiatives that provide multiple benefits on the same land.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will accept new offers to participate in CRP under a general signup to be held December 1, 2015, through February 26, 2016. Eligible existing program participants with contracts expiring September 30, 2015, will be granted an option for one-year extensions. Farmers interested in removing sensitive land from agricultural production and planting grasses or trees to reduce soil erosion, improve water quality and restore wildlife habitat are encouraged to enroll.

For 30 years, the Conservation Reserve Program has helped farmers prevent more than 8 billion tons of soil from eroding, reduce nitrogen and phosphorous runoff relative to cropland by 95 and 85 percent respectively, and even sequester 43 million tons of greenhouse gases annually, equal to taking 8 million cars off the road.

The voluntary Conservation Reserve Program allows USDA to contract with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive land is conserved. Participants establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat. In return, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years.

CRP protects water quality and restores significant habitat for ducks, pheasants, turkey, quail, deer and other important wildlife which spurs economic development like hunting and fishing, outdoor recreation and tourism across rural America. Today's announcement allows an additional 800,000 acres for duck nesting habitat and other wetland and wildlife habitat initiatives to be enrolled in the program.

Farmers should consider the various CRP continuous sign-up initiatives that may help target specific resource concerns. Financial assistance is offered for many practices including conservation buffers and pollinator habitat plantings, and initiatives such as the highly erodible lands, bottomland hardwood tree and longleaf pine.

Farmers may visit their FSA county office for additional information. The 2014 Farm Bill authorized the enrollment of grasslands in CRP and information on grasslands enrollment will be available after

the regulation is published later this summer.

For more information on CRP and other FSA programs, please visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

Producers Must Report Prevented Planting and Failed Acres

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds producers to report prevented planting and failed acres in order to establish or retain FSA program eligibility.

Producers must report crop acreage they intended to plant, but due to natural disaster, were prevented from planting. Prevented planting acreage must be reported on form FSA-576, Notice of Loss, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and Risk Management Agency (RMA).

If a producer is unable to report the prevented planting acreage within the 15 calendar days following the final planting date, a late-filed report can be submitted. Late-filed reports will only be accepted if FSA conducts a farm visit to assess the eligible disaster condition that prevented the crop from being planted. A measurement service fee will be charged.

Additionally, producers with failed acres should also use form FSA-576, Notice of Loss, to report failed acres.

For losses on crops covered by the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) and crop insurance, producers must file a Notice of Loss within 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent. Producers must timely file a Notice of Loss for failed acres on all crops including grasses.

Please contact your local FSA Office to schedule an appointment to file a Notice of Loss. To find your local FSA office visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

2015 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.

The following acreage reporting dates are the last day to report for all Virginia Counties:

- June 15, 2015: Beans (Planted 3/4- 5/25)
- July 15, 2015: Corn, Cotton, CRP, Grain Sorghum, Soybeans, Beans (Planted 5/26-7/10), Tomatoes (Planted 5/16-7/5), and all other crops not listed elsewhere.
- August 15, 2015: Cabbage (Planted 4/16-7/10)
- September 15, 2015: Beans (Planted 7/15-9/5)
- November 15, 2015: Pasture, Rangeland, Forage (PRF), Perennial Forages, Apiculture
- January 15, 2016: Fall-Seeded Small Grains (Wheat, Barley, Oats, Rye, etc), Apples, Peaches

The following exceptions apply to the above acreage recording dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the above 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 above acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar 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 dates listed above 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 service center](#).

Filing a Notice of Loss

The CCC-576, Notice of Loss, is used to report failed acreage and prevented planting and may be completed by any producer with an interest in the crop. Timely filing a Notice of Loss is required for all crops including grasses. For losses on crops covered by the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) and crop insurance, you must file a CCC-576, Notice of Loss, in the FSA County Office within 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent.

Producers of hand-harvested crops must notify FSA of damage or loss through the administrative County Office within 72 hours of the date of damage or loss first becomes apparent. This notification can be provided by filing a CCC-576, email, fax or phone. Producers who notify the County Office by any method other than by filing the CCC-576 are still required to file a CCC-576, Notice of Loss, within the required 15 calendar days.

If filing for prevented planting, an acreage report and CCC-576 must be filed within 15 calendar days of the final planting date for the crop.

ARC, PLC and CTAP Acreage Maintenance

Producers enrolled in Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC), Price Loss Coverage (PLC) or the Cotton Transition Assistance Program (CTAP) must protect all cropland and noncropland acres on the farm from wind and water erosion and noxious weeds. Producers who sign ARC county or individual contracts and PLC contracts agree to effectively control noxious weeds on the farm according to sound agricultural practices. If a producer fails to take necessary actions to correct a maintenance problem on a farm that is enrolled in ARC, PLC or CTAP, the County Committee may elect to terminate the contract for the program year.

A list of noxious weeds can be found on the following website:
<http://plants.usda.gov/java/noxiousDriver>.

USDA Announces New Support for Beginning Farmers

Department Implementing New Farm Bill Programs, Unveiling New Centralized Online Resource to Support Next Generation of Farmers

USDA has announced the implementation of new Farm Bill measures and other policy changes to improve the financial security of new and beginning farmers. USDA also unveiled www.USDA.gov/newfarmers a new website that will provide a centralized, one-stop resource where

beginning farmers can explore the variety of USDA initiatives designed to help them succeed.

USDA's www.usda.gov/newfarmers has in depth information for new farmers, including: how to increase access to land and capital; build new market opportunities; participate in conservation opportunities; select and use the right risk management tools; and access USDA education, and technical support programs. These issues have been identified as top priorities by new farmers. The website will also feature instructive case studies about beginning farmers who have successfully utilized USDA resources to start or expand their business operations.

Today's policy announcements in support of beginning farmers include:

- Waiving service fees for new and beginning farmers to enroll in the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) for the 2014 crop year. NAP provides risk management tools to farmers who grow crops for which there is no crop insurance product. Under this waiver, announced via an [official notice](#) to Farm Service Agency offices, farmers whom already enrolled in NAP for the 2014 crop year and certified to being a beginning farmer or social disadvantaged farmer are eligible for a service fee refund.
- Eliminating payment reductions under the [Conservation Reserve Program](#) (CRP) for new and beginning farmers which will allow routine, prescribed, and emergency grazing outside the primary nesting season on enrolled land consistent with approved conservation plans. Previously, farmers grazing on CRP land were subject to a reduction in CRP payments of up to 25 percent. Waiving these reductions for new and beginning farmers will provide extra financial support during times of emergency like drought and other natural disasters.
- Increasing payment rates to beginning farmers under Emergency Assistance for [Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#). Under this provision, beginning farmers can claim up 90 percent of losses for lost livestock, such as bees, under ELAP. This is a fifty percent increase over previously available payment amounts to new and beginning farmers.

In the near future, USDA will also announce additional crop insurance program changes for beginning farmers – including discounted premiums, waiver of administrative fees, and other benefits.

Additional information about USDA actions in support of beginning farmers and ranchers is available [here](#).

USDA Announces Changes to Fruit, Vegetable and Wild Rice Planting Rules

Farm Service Agency (FSA) has announced fruit, vegetable and wild rice provisions that affect producers who intend to participate in certain programs authorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014.

Producers who intend to participate in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs are subject to an acre-for-acre payment reduction when fruits and nuts, vegetables or wild rice are planted on the payment acres of a farm. Planting fruits, vegetables or wild rice on acres that are not considered payment acres will not result in a payment reduction. Farms that are eligible to participate in ARC/PLC but are not enrolled for a particular year may plant unlimited fruits, vegetables and wild rice for that year but will not receive ARC/PLC payments for that year. Eligibility for succeeding years is not affected.

Planting and harvesting fruits, vegetables and wild rice on ARC/PLC acreage is subject to the acre-for-acre payment reduction when those crops are planted on either more than 15 percent of the

base acres of a farm enrolled in ARC using the county coverage or PLC, or more than 35 percent of the base acres of a farm enrolled in ARC using the individual coverage.

Fruits, vegetables and wild rice that are planted in a double-cropping practice will not cause a payment reduction if the farm is in a double-cropping region as designated by the USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation.

Agricultural Producers in Virginia Still Have Time to Apply for Direct Farm Ownership Loan Program

Low-Interest Loans Can Help Producers Start or Expand Farms

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Virginia Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that farmers and ranchers still have time to apply for low interest loans available through the FSA direct farm ownership program. Applications must be approved by September 30, 2015, to take advantage of the funding available.

Eligible farmers can borrow up to \$300,000 to buy farmland, construct or repair buildings, pay closing costs, or promote soil and water conservation. The interest rate can be as low as 1.5 percent with up to 40 years to repay.

New farmers, military veterans, and underserved farmers also are encouraged to apply. Each year Congress targets 80 percent of available loan funds to beginning and targeted underserved farmers. Targeted underserved groups include American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians, or other Pacific Islanders, Hispanics and women.

For more information about farm loan, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans, or contact your local FSA office. To find your local FSA county office, visit <https://offices.usda.gov>.

Guaranteed Loan Program

FSA guaranteed loans allow lenders to provide agricultural credit to farmers who do not meet the lender's normal underwriting criteria. Farmers apply for a guaranteed loan through a lender, and the lender arranges for the guarantee. FSA can guarantee up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan. Guaranteed loans can be used for both farm ownership and operating purposes.

Guaranteed farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, construct or repair buildings, develop farmland to promote soil and water conservation or to refinance debt.

Guaranteed operating loans can be used to purchase livestock, farm equipment, feed, seed, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance and other operating expenses.

FSA can guarantee farm ownership and operating loans up to \$1,392,000. Repayment terms vary depending on the type of loan, collateral and the producer's ability to repay the loan. Operating loans are normally repaid within seven years and farm ownership loans are not to exceed 40 years.

Please contact your lender or local FSA farm loan office for more information on guaranteed loans.

Selected Interest Rates for June 2015

90-Day Treasury Bill - 0.125%

Farm Operating Loans — Direct - 2.375%

Farm Ownership Loans — Direct - 3.50%

Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher - 1.50%

Emergency Loans - 3.375%

Farm Storage Facility Loans

- 7 years - 1.875%
- 10 years - 2.125%
- 12 years - 2.250%

Commodity Loans 1996-Present - 1.250%

For more information on bulletin subjects or details regarding your GovDelivery subscription with the Virginia FSA State Office, contact Dan Mertz at dan.mertz@va.usda.gov or call at 804-287-1548.

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