

February 2016



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Oklahoma FSA Newsletter

Oklahoma Farm Service Agency

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USDA Sees Strong Demand for Conservation Reserve Program

Deadline to Submit Offers for Competitive Enrollment is Feb. 26

USDA reminds farmers and ranchers that the competitive sign-up deadline for its most popular voluntary conservation program, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), is **Feb. 26, 2016**. This will be one of the most competitive general sign-up periods in history, in part due a statutory limit on the number of acres that can be enrolled in the program. The most competitive applications will be those that combine multiple conservation benefits, such as water quality and wildlife habitat.

For the past thirty years, CRP has provided financial incentives to farmers and ranchers to remove environmentally sensitive agricultural land from production to be planted with certain grasses, shrubs and trees that improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and increase wildlife habitat. Since 1985, CRP has sequestered an annual average of 49 million tons of greenhouse gases, equal to

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Please contact your local FSA
Office for questions specific to
your operation or county. FSA
Office contact information can
be located on our [online
Directory](#).

taking 9 million cars off the road; prevented 9 billion tons of soil from erosion, enough to fill 600 million dump trucks; and reduced nitrogen and phosphorous runoff by 95 and 85 percent, respectively. CRP also protects more than 170,000 stream miles with forests and grasses, enough to go around the world seven times. The program has allowed for the restoration of 2.7 million acres of wetland.

As of January 2016, 23.6 million acres were enrolled in CRP, with contracts for more than 1.6 million acres set to expire this fall. The statutory cap on acres that can be enrolled is 24 million acres. Submissions will be ranked according to environmental benefits in comparison to all other offers nationwide. USDA will announce accepted offers after the enrollment period ends and offers are reviewed. For an interactive tour of CRP success stories from across the U.S., visit www.fsa.usda.gov/CRPis30, or follow on Twitter at #CRPis30.

For an interactive look at USDA's work in conservation and forestry over the course of this Administration, visit <http://medium.com/usda-results>

Deadline to Purchase NAP Coverage for Spring and Summer Planted Crops is March 15th

The Oklahoma Farm Service Agency would like to remind producers that they have until **March 15, 2016**, to sign-up for the Noninsurable Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage for spring and summer planted crops. This deadline applies to warm season grasses intended for grazing as well as spring and summer planted crops such as: forage sorghum, peas, sunflowers, watermelons and other spring and summer planted specialty crops grown for food. The 2014 Farm Bill allows for higher coverage levels (50% to 65% yield protection at 100% of price) for non-grazing crops.

In order to meet eligibility requirements for NAP, crops must be noninsurable, commercially-produced agricultural commodity crops for which the catastrophic risk protection level of crop insurance is not available. If the Risk Management Agency (RMA) offers coverage for a crop in the county, NAP coverage is not available for that crop. Pilot policies of insurance are available for annually planted forage crops; therefore, NAP coverage can also be obtained but they are subject to multiple benefits exclusion. A producer who obtains both pilot insurance coverage and NAP coverage must choose which payment to receive if both qualify for payment.

The service fee is \$250 per crop per county or \$750 per producer per county. The fee cannot exceed a total of \$1875 per producer with farming interests in multiple counties. Higher levels of coverage also have a 5.25 percent premium cost. Socially disadvantaged, limited resource, and beginning farmers are eligible for a waiver of the NAP service fees and premium reduced by 50

percent.

Enrollment Period for 2016 USDA Safety Net Coverage Ends Aug. 1

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has announced that producers who chose coverage from the safety net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill, known as the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, can visit FSA county offices through **August 1, 2016**, to sign contracts to enroll in coverage for 2016.

Although the choice between ARC and PLC is completed and remains in effect through 2018, producers must still enroll their farm by signing a contract each year to receive coverage.

Producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office to schedule an appointment to enroll. If a farm is not enrolled during the 2016 enrollment period, producers on that farm will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs should crop prices or farm revenues fall below the historical price or revenue benchmarks established by the program.

The two programs were authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill and offer a safety net to agricultural producers when there is a substantial drop in prices or revenues for covered commodities. 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 grain rice (which includes short grain and sweet rice), safflower seed, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat. Upland cotton is no longer a covered commodity. For more details regarding these programs, go to www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.

For more information, producers are encouraged to visit their local FSA office. To find a local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Filing CCC-941 Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) Certifications

Many producers have experienced delays in receiving Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) payments, Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs) and Market Gains on Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) because they have not filed form CCC-941, Adjusted Gross Income Certification. LDPs will not be paid until all eligible producers, including landowners who share in the crop, have filed a valid CCC-941.

Producers without a valid CCC-941 certifying their compliance with the average adjusted gross income provisions will not receive payments that have been processed. Any farm operator/tenants/owners who have not filed a CCC-941 and have pending payments should IMMEDIATELY file the form with their recording county FSA office. Farm operators and tenants are encouraged to ensure that their landowners have filed the form. FSA has been issuing 2014 ARC/PLC payments, 2015 LDPs and Market Gains.

FSA can accept the CCC-941 for 2014, 2015 and 2016. Unlike the past, producers must have the CCC-941 certifying their AGI compliance before any payments can be issued.

FSA Issues Fiscal Year 2015 Impacts Report

2015 marks the 20th anniversary of USDA's Farm Service Agency, but FSA's roots date back

nearly 80 years, to the days of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl, when the rural economy was in crisis and America's farmers and ranchers needed assistance. At that time, Congress empowered USDA to provide a strong safety-net for farm families, helping them navigate the unpredictability of natural disasters and volatile market conditions.

Today, technological advancements in equipment, crop and veterinary sciences, soil and water conservation, and pest and nutrient management, all have resulted in agriculture becoming stronger than we've ever known - - certainly far stronger than the days of our grandparents and great-grandparents. But the unpredictability of weather and markets remain. That means the FSA mission is as important as it's ever been to ensure the domestic agriculture sector continues to deliver an abundant, safe, and affordable food and fiber supply for the American people.

The [FSA Impacts Report](#) shows selected highlights for fiscal year 2015. This report highlights the achievements of FSA and will ensure that the path forward continues to demonstrate our commitment to rural America.

What Are Playas

We grew up on the High Plains thinking of those occasionally muddy pasture depressions as "buffalo wallows" or "mud holes." Turns out, scientists are learning those playas play a significant role in recharging the Ogallala aquifer. They are the most numerous wetland in the region, more than 75,000 of them, and they're an important source of water — both for people and wildlife. Learn more in this short radio spot by Playa Lakes Joint Venture. Audio:

http://pljv.org/radio_episodes/what-are-playas/

****These spotlights are brought to you through USDA's partnership with the Playa Lakes Joint Venture— The mission of Playa Lakes Joint Venture (PLJV) is to conserve the playas, prairies and landscapes of the western Great Plains — including portions of Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. <http://pljv.org/>*

USDA Expands Microloans to Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property

Producers, Including Beginning and Underserved Farmers, Have a New Option to Gain Access to Land

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will begin offering farm ownership microloans, creating a new financing avenue for farmers to buy and improve property. These microloans will be especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming, and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations.

The microloan program, which celebrates its third anniversary this week, has been hugely successful, providing more than 16,800 low-interest loans, totaling over \$373 million to producers across the country. Microloans have helped farmers and ranchers with operating costs, such as feed, fertilizer, tools, fencing, equipment, and living expenses since 2013. Seventy percent of loans have gone to new farmers.

Now, microloans will be available to also help with farm land and building purchases, and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate loans to help farmers strengthen their operations. Microloans provide up to \$50,000 to qualified producers and can be

issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

This microloan announcement is another USDA resource for America's farmers and ranchers to utilize, especially as [new and beginning farmers and ranchers](#) look for the assistance they need to get started. To learn more about the FSA microloan program visit www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans, or contact your local FSA office. To find your nearest office location, please visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Farm Storage Facility Loans

FSA's Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program provides low-interest financing to producers to build or upgrade storage facilities.

The low-interest funds can be used to build or upgrade permanent facilities to store commodities. Eligible commodities include corn, grain sorghum, rice, soybeans, oats, peanuts, wheat, barley, minor oilseeds harvested as whole grain, pulse crops (lentils, chickpeas and dry peas), hay, honey, renewable biomass, fruits, nuts and vegetables for cold storage facilities, floriculture, hops, maple sap, rye, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, meat and poultry (unprocessed), eggs, and aquaculture (excluding systems that maintain live animals through uptake and discharge of water). Qualified facilities include grain bins, hay barns and cold storage facilities for eligible commodities.

Loans up to \$50,000 can be secured by a promissory note/security agreement and some loans between \$50,000 and \$100,000 will no longer require additional security.

Producers do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply. The loans are designed to assist a diverse range of farming operations, including small and mid-sized businesses, new farmers, operations supplying local food and farmers markets, non-traditional farm products, and underserved producers.

To learn more about the FSA Farm Storage Facility Loan, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport or contact your local FSA county office. To find your local FSA county office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

New USDA Commitments to Help Build Up Next Generation of Farmers and Ranchers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced a commitment by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to prioritize \$5.6 billion over the next two years within USDA programs and services that serve new and beginning farmers and ranchers. Deputy Secretary Harden also announced a new, tailored web tool designed to connect burgeoning farm entrepreneurs with programs and resources available to help them get started.

The new web tool is available at www.usda.gov/newfarmers. The site was designed based on feedback from new and beginning farmers and ranchers around the country, who cited unfamiliarity with programs and resources as a challenge to starting and expanding their operations. The site features advice and guidance on everything a new farm business owner needs to know, from writing a business plan, to obtaining a loan to grow their business, to filing taxes as a new small business owner. By answering a series of questions about their operation, farmers can use the site's Discovery Tool to build a personalized set of recommendations of USDA programs and services that may meet their needs.

Using the new web tool and other outreach activities, and operating within its existing resources, USDA has set a new goal of increasing beginning farmer and rancher participation by an additional 6.6 percent across key USDA programs, which were established or strengthened by the 2014 Farm Bill, for a total investment value of approximately \$5.6 billion. Programs were targeted for expanded outreach and commitment based on their impact on expanding opportunity for new and beginning farmers and ranchers, including starting or expanding an operation, developing new markets, supporting more effective farming and conservation practices, and having access to relevant training and education opportunities. USDA will provide quarterly updates on its progress towards meeting its goal. A full explanation of the investment targets, benchmarks and outcomes is available at: [BFR-Commitment-Factsheet](#).

As the average age of the American farmer now exceeds 58 years, and data shows that almost 10 percent of farmland in the continental United States will change hands in the next five years, we have no time to lose in getting more new farmers and ranchers established. Equally important is encouraging young people to pursue careers in industries that support American agriculture. According to [an employment outlook report](#) released by USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and Purdue University, one of the best fields for new college graduates is agriculture. Nearly 60,000 high-skilled agriculture job openings are expected annually in the United States for the next five years, yet only 35,000 graduates with a bachelor's degree or higher in agriculture related fields are expected to be available to fill them. The report also shows that women make up more than half of the food, agriculture, renewable natural resources, and environment higher education graduates in the United States. USDA recently released a [series of fact sheets](#) showcasing the impact of women in agriculture nationwide.

Today's announcement builds on USDA's ongoing work to engage its resources to inspire a strong next generation of farmers and ranchers by improving access to land and capital; building market opportunities; extending conservation opportunities; offering appropriate risk management tools; and increasing outreach and technical support. To learn more about USDA's efforts, visit the [Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Results Page](#).

Firearms and Dangerous Weapons Forbidden In Federal Facilities

USDA Service Centers and Farm Service Agency Offices are Off Limits for Firearms

This is an important reminder to all customers and patrons of USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices and USDA Service Centers statewide that **firearms are forbidden (even with a permit/license) in Federal Buildings**. A Federal Building by definition is any building owned, leased or rented by the Federal Government, where Federal employees are regularly present for the purpose of performing their official duties.

The items that are prohibited in Federal facilities include any item prohibited by any applicable Federal, State, local, and tribal law and/or ordinance, as well as firearms, dangerous weapons, explosives, or other destructive devices (including their individual parts or components) designed, redesigned, used, intended for use, or readily converted to cause injury, death, or property damage. Possession of firearms and dangerous weapons in Federal facilities as outline above is a crime punishable by fines and imprisonment.

For a complete list of items prohibited in Federal facilities, please view and/or download the document titled, **Items Prohibited from Federal Facilities: An Interagency Security Committee Standard**: <http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/isc-items-prohibited-federal-facilities-feb-2013-508.pdf> **The lists of prohibited items outlined in this document apply to all facility**

occupants, contractors, and the visiting public.

If you have questions or concerns regarding this notification, please contact your local Farm Service Agency Office—<http://offices.usda.gov>.

Farm Loan Interest Rates:

- Farm Operating Loans = 2.625%
- Farm Ownership Loans = 3.875%
- Farm Ownership Down Payment Loans = 1.5%
- Micro Loans = 2.625%
- Youth Loans = 2.625%
- Emergency Loans = 3.625%

*Rates effective as of February 1, 2016

Upcoming Important Dates:

- **February 26, 2016** - End of enrollment period for CRP General Sign-Up 49
- **March 13, 2016** - Daylight Savings Begins
- **March 15, 2016** - NAP application deadline for warm season grasses & summer crops
- **May 30, 2016** – Federal Offices Closed - Memorial Day
- **July 4, 2016** – Federal Offices Closed - Independence Day
- **July 15, 2016** - Acreage Reporting Deadline - Summer Crops & CRP

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