

June 2015



Oklahoma FSA Program Updates and Reminders

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Hours:

Monday - Friday
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

State Committee Members:

Cletus Carter, Beaver
(Chairman)
Steve Nunley, Marlow
Brenda Neufeld, Fairview
Steve Butler, Wagoner
Jo Jennings, Depew

State Staff:

Phil Estes,
Farm Loan Programs

Tona Huggins,
Production & Payment
Eligibility

Rod Wanger,
Conservation Programs

Danny Lee,
Compliance & Price Support

Krey Reimer,
Administration

Shelly Bilderback,
Public Relations/Outreach

USDA Opens Enrollment Period for Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Safety-Net Programs

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has officially opened enrollment in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for 2014 and 2015. The enrollment period began on June 17, 2015, and will end Sept. 30, 2015.

The new programs, established by the 2014 Farm Bill, trigger financial protections for agricultural producers when market forces cause substantial drops in crop prices or revenues. More than 1.76 million farmers have elected ARC or PLC. Previously, 1.7 million producers had enrolled to receive direct payments (the program replaced with ARC and PLC by the 2014 Farm Bill). This means more farms have elected ARC or PLC than enrolled under previously administered programs.

Land owners were given the opportunity to do yield updates/base reallocations, then elected either the ARC or PLC program. This final step is enrollment by anyone with an interest in a crop on a farm that has historical base acres.

All producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office to schedule an appointment to complete the enrollment process.

Producers Must Report Prevented Planting and Failed Acres

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 CCC-576, Notice of Loss, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and/or 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 CCC-576, Notice of Loss, to report failed acres before disposition of the crop.

For losses on crops covered by NAP you must notify FSA of damage within 72 hours for hand harvested crops and 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.

2015 Acreage Reporting Deadlines

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

- **July 15** - final date to report spring-planted crops (Corn, cotton, grain sorghum, sesame, soybeans, sunflowers) and CRP.
- **November 15** - final date to report all 2016 crop-year grass, pasture, range, and forage crops including alfalfa.

Exception: If the crop has NAP coverage, the crop must be reported 15 calendar days before the onset of harvest.

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

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has announced 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 USDA will accept new offers to participate in CRP under a general signup to be held Dec. 1, 2015, through Feb. 26, 2016. Eligible existing program participants with contracts expiring Sept. 30, 2015, will be granted an option for one-year extensions. Farmers and ranchers 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 and ranchers 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, the Farm Service Agency 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. The Secretary'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 and ranchers 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.

FSA County Committee Nominations

FSA is looking for candidates for an upcoming producer-elected county committee election. **FSA offices throughout Oklahoma will accept nominations June 15 through August 3, 2015.** County Committees have a direct influence on the delivery of federal farm programs. They make decisions on disaster and conservation programs, emergency programs, commodity price support loan programs and other agricultural issues.

FSA encourages all interested agricultural producers, including women and minority growers, to seek nomination. Eligible candidates must participate or cooperate in any Farm Service Agency program and be of legal voting age. Even if farmers and ranchers are not currently participating in FSA programs, they are considered eligible to vote under the cooperation criteria if they have farm records on file with the agency.

Farmers and ranchers may nominate themselves or others, and organizations representing minorities and women also may nominate candidates. To become a candidate, an eligible individual must sign the nomination form, FSA-669A. The

form and other information about FSA county committee elections are available online at www.fsa.usda.gov/elections. **Nomination forms for the 2015 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA Service Center by close of business on Aug. 3, 2015.** Elections will take place this fall.

FSA Direct Loans

FSA offers direct farm ownership and direct farm operating loans to producers who want to establish, maintain or strengthen their farm or ranch. FSA loan officers process, approve and service direct loans.

Direct farm operating loans can be used to purchase livestock and feed, farm equipment, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance and other costs including family living expenses. Operating loans can also be used to finance minor improvements or repairs to buildings and to refinance some farm-related debts, excluding real estate.

Direct farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, enlarge an existing farm, construct and repair buildings, and to make farm improvements.

The maximum loan amount for both direct farm ownership and operating loans is \$300,000 and a down payment is not required. 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 local FSA office for information on how to apply for a direct farm ownership or operating loan. A Guide to Farm Loans and application forms can also be found online at www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans.

Oklahoma's 2015 Statewide Women in Agriculture and Small Business Conference

The Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service along with USDA's Risk Management Agency is pleased to announce the annual conference for women in agriculture and small business August 6-7 in Oklahoma City. The 2-day conference offers a variety of sessions to assist participants in successfully managing risk for their families, farms and/or businesses. Twenty concurrent sessions will be offered from three tracks—agriculture, alternative enterprises and business & finance—with participants able to choose whatever session is of most value to them.

The registration fee is \$50 a person by August 1 or \$60 per person after August 1. The registration fee includes two breakfasts, two lunches, and all breaks.

The registration brochure, agenda, hotel information and more can be found on the Oklahoma Statewide Women in Ag website at: <http://www.okwomeninagandsmallbusiness.com/>. For questions, please call or email Sara Siems at 405-744-9826 or sara.siems@okstate.edu. To register over the phone, please call 405-744-9836.

Farm Loan Interest Rates:

- Farm Operating Loans = 2.5%
- Farm Ownership Loans = 3.75%
- Farm Ownership Down Payment Loans = 1.5%
- Micro Loans = 2.5%
- Youth Loans = 2.5%
- Emergency Loans = 3.5%

*Rates effective July 1, 2015

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