

November 2014



Having trouble viewing this email? [View it as a Web page.](#)

- [Upcoming Farm Bill Workshops for Maryland Producers](#)
- [USDA Farm Service Agency County Committee Elections](#)
- [USDA Extends Dairy Margin Protection Program Deadlines](#)
- [USDA Farm Service Agency Announces Key Dates for New 2014 Farm Bill Safety Net Programs](#)
- [Tree Assistance Program \(TAP\) Sign-up Continues](#)
- [2014 MAL and LDP Requests](#)
- [USDA Expands Access to Credit to Help More Beginning and Family Farmers](#)
- [Loans for the Socially Disadvantaged](#)
- [Save Time – Make an Appointment with FSA](#)
- [Interest Rates and Dates to Remember](#)

---

## Maryland FSA Updates

---

### Maryland Farm Service Agency

339 Busch's Frontage Road,  
Suite 104  
Annapolis, MD 21409

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

#### State Committee:

William Malkus, Chairperson  
Pamela S. Callahan  
David Patrick  
Sarah Rider  
William D. Walmsley

#### State Executive Director:

Linda D. Slacum

#### Farm Loan Program Chief:

### Upcoming Farm Bill Workshops for Maryland Producers

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), University of Maryland's Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics (AREC), University of Maryland Extension (UME), Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), and USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) are announcing a series of upcoming Farm Bill workshops across Maryland.

These workshops will familiarize participants with final rules, signup deadlines, and how to utilize decision tools to pick the program options that work best for a producer.

Upcoming Workshops will be held on:

- [December 4 – Baltimore County UME office, Cockeysville, MD](#) (commodity emphasis)
- [January 7 - Wor-Wic Community College, Salisbury, MD](#) (commodity emphasis)

Cheryl Walker

**Farm Programs Chief:**  
Bob Wevodau

Please contact your [local FSA Office](#) for questions specific to your operation or county.

- [January 8 - St. Mary's County Ag Center, Leonardtown, MD](#) (commodity emphasis)
- Organizers are planning to offer a workshop in Washington County in January. The date and location will be announced once finalized.

Producers will hear from experts with FSA on the finalized program rules and signup deadlines for the new commodity programs Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC) programs and the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program and the new Dairy Margin Protection Program (MPP). Decision tools developed in partnership with FSA will be highlighted by representatives from AREC. The decision tools are designed to help producers gain an understanding of how these programs could potentially manage risks in their operations. RMA will cover new crop insurance options, such as Supplemental Coverage Option.

Finally, participants will be provided with an opportunity to utilize the web-based decision making tools and ask questions to the trainers. The decision making process in the 2014 Farm Bill is not an easy process, and understanding how the decision making tools can aid in this decision will allow the producer to make a better decision for their individual operation. Producers are highly encouraged to bring past yield histories, previous planting histories, and base acres for at least one farm to see how a program would impact your farm.

Each workshop will run from 9:30 to 3pm and lunch will be provided. Preregistration is required. Please contact your local UME office for specific details on how to register.

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in any Farm Bill Workshop should contact the County Executive Director (CED) at the [local Farm Service Agency \(FSA\) office](#) or Federal Relay Service at [1-800-877-8339](tel:1-800-877-8339) by at least three days prior to the event.

---

## **USDA Farm Service Agency County Committee Elections**

USDA encourages farmers and ranchers to make their voices heard by voting in the upcoming Farm Service Agency (FSA) County Committee elections. Beginning Monday, Nov. 3, 2014, USDA mailed ballots for the 2014 elections to eligible producers across the country. Producers must return ballots to their local FSA offices by the Dec. 1, 2014, deadline to ensure that their vote is counted.

FSA County Committee members provide an important link between the local agricultural community and USDA. Farmers and ranchers elected to county committees help deliver FSA programs at the local level, applying their knowledge and judgment to make decisions on commodity support programs; conservation programs; indemnity and disaster programs; emergency programs and eligibility. County committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws.

To be an eligible voter, farmers and ranchers must participate or cooperate in an FSA program. A person who is not of legal voting age, but supervises and conducts the farming operations of an entire farm may also be eligible to vote.

Eligible voters who do not receive ballots may pick one up at their local USDA Service Center or FSA office. The deadline to submit ballots is Dec. 1, 2014. Ballots returned by mail must be postmarked no later than Dec. 1, 2014. Newly elected committee members and their alternates will take office Jan. 1, 2015.

More information on county committees, such as the new 2014 fact sheet and brochures, can be found on the FSA website at [www.fsa.usda.gov/elections](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/elections). You may also contact your local USDA Service Center or FSA office. Visit <http://go.usa.gov/pYV3> to find an FSA office near you.

---

## USDA Extends Dairy Margin Protection Program Deadlines

USDA is extending the deadlines for the dairy Margin Protection Program. Farmers now have until Dec. 5, 2014, to enroll in the voluntary program, established by the 2014 Farm Bill. The program provides financial assistance to participating farmers when the margin – the difference between the price of milk and feed costs – falls below the coverage level selected by the farmer.

Producers are encouraged to use the online Web resource at [www.fsa.usda.gov/mpptool](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mpptool) to calculate the best levels of coverage for their dairy operation. The secure website can be accessed via computer, smartphone or tablet.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) also extended the opportunity for public comments on both the Margin Protection Program and the Dairy Product Donation Program until Dec. 15, 2014.

Comments can be submitted to USDA via the [regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) website at <http://go.usa.gov/GJSA>.

---

## USDA Farm Service Agency Announces Key Dates for New 2014 Farm Bill Safety Net Programs

USDA announces key dates for farm owners and producers to keep in mind regarding the new 2014 Farm Bill established programs, Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC). The new programs, designed to help producers better manage risk, usher in one of the most significant reforms to U.S. farm programs in decades.

Dates associated with ARC and PLC that farm owners and producers need to know:

- Sept. 29, 2014 to Feb. 27, 2015: Land owners may visit their local Farm Service Agency office to update yield history and/or reallocate base acres.
- Nov. 17, 2014 to March 31, 2015: Producers make a one-time election of either ARC or PLC for the 2014 through 2018 crop years.
- Mid-April 2015 through summer 2015: Producers sign contracts for 2014 and 2015 crop years.
- October 2015: Payments for 2014 crop year, if needed.

USDA leaders will visit with producers across the country to share information and answer questions on the ARC and PLC programs.

USDA helped create online tools to assist in the decision process, allowing farm owners and producers to enter information about their operation and see projections that show what ARC and/or PLC will mean for them under possible future scenarios. The new tools are now available at [www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc). Farm owners and producers can access the online resources from the convenience of their home computer or mobile device at any time.

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 rice), safflower seed, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat. Upland cotton is no longer a covered commodity.

Producers can contact their local FSA office for more information or to schedule an appointment.

---

## **Tree Assistance Program (TAP) Sign-up Continues**

As of Tuesday, April 15, 2014, orchardists and nursery tree growers who experienced losses from natural disasters that occurred on or after Oct. 1, 2011, can sign up for the Tree Assistance Program (TAP). TAP was authorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014 as a permanent disaster program. TAP provides financial assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines damaged by natural disasters.

Eligible tree types include trees, bushes or vines that produce an annual crop for commercial purposes. Nursery trees include ornamental, fruit, nut and Christmas trees that are produced for commercial sale. Trees used for pulp or timber are ineligible.

To qualify for TAP, orchardists must suffer a qualifying tree, bush or vine loss in excess of 15 percent mortality from an eligible natural disaster. The eligible trees, bushes or vines must have been owned when the natural disaster occurred; however, eligible growers are not required to own the land on which the eligible trees, bushes and vines were planted.

If the TAP application is approved, the eligible trees, bushes and vines must be replaced within 12 months from the date the application is approved. The cumulative total quantity of acres planted to trees, bushes or vines, for which a producer can receive TAP payments, cannot exceed 500 acres annually.

---

## **2014 MAL and LDP Requests**

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) is accepting requests for marketing assistance loans (MALs) and loan deficiency payments (LDPs) for eligible 2014 commodities.

MALs and LDPs for the 2014 crop year become available to eligible producers beginning with harvest/shearing season and extending through a specific commodity's final loan availability date. Sugar commodity loans for the 2014 crop became available to sugar processors on Oct. 1, 2014.

MALs and LDPs provide financing and marketing assistance for wheat, feed grains, soybeans, and other oilseeds, pulse crops, rice, peanuts, cotton, wool, mohair and honey. MALs provide producers interim financing after harvest to help them meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows. A producer who is eligible to obtain a loan, but agrees to forgo the loan, may obtain an LDP if such a payment is available. Marketing loan provisions and LDPs are not available for sugar and extra-long staple cotton.

Before MAL repayments and LDP disbursements can be made, producers must meet the requirements of actively engaged in farming, cash rent tenant and member contribution.

Additionally, form CCC-902 and CCC-901 must be submitted for the 2014 crop year, if applicable, with a county committee determination and updated subsidiary files.

To be considered eligible for an LDP, producers must have form CCC-633EZ, Page 1 on file at their local FSA Office before losing beneficial interest in the crop. Pages 2, 3 or 4 of the form must be submitted when payment is requested.

Please contact your local FSA office for additional eligibility requirements.

The 2014 Farm Bill also establishes payment limitations per individual or entity not to exceed \$125,000 annually on certain commodities for the following program benefits: price loss coverage payments, agriculture risk coverage payments, marketing loan gains (MLGs) and LDPs. These payment limitations do not apply to MAL loan disbursements.

Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) provisions were modified by the 2014 Farm Bill, which states that a producer whose total applicable three-year average AGI exceeds \$900,000 is not eligible to receive an MLG or LDP.

National and county loans rates for 2014 crops are posted on the FSA website at: [www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport).

For more information, please visit a nearby USDA Service Center or FSA's website [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

---

## **USDA Expands Access to Credit to Help More Beginning and Family Farmers**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced improvements to farm loan programs by expanding eligibility and increasing lending limits to help more beginning and family farmers. As part of this effort, USDA is raising the borrowing limit for the microloan program from \$35,000 to \$50,000; simplify the lending processes; updating required "farming experience" to include other valuable experiences; and expanding eligible business entities to reflect changes in the way family farms are owned and operated. The changes become effective Nov. 7.

The microloan changes will allow beginning, small and mid-sized farmers to access an additional \$15,000 in loans using a simplified application process with up to seven years to repay. Microloans are part of USDA's continued commitment to [small and midsized farming operations](#).

In addition to farm related experience, other types of skills may be considered to meet the direct farming experience required for farm loan eligibility such as operation or management of a non-farm business, leadership positions while serving in the military, or advanced education in an agricultural field. Also, individuals who own farmland under a different legal entity operating the farm now may be eligible for loans administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Producers will have an opportunity to share suggestions on the microloan process, and the definitions of farming experience and business structures through Dec. 8, 2014, the public open comment period.

For more information on farm loans, please visit [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov) or contact your local Farm Service Agency office.

---

## **Loans for the Socially Disadvantaged**

FSA has a number of loan programs available to assist applicants to begin or continue in agriculture production. Loans are available for operating type loans and/or purchase or improve farms or ranches.

While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, the FSA has provided priority funding for members of socially disadvantaged applicants.

A socially disadvantaged applicant is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of his or her identity as members of the group without regard to his or her individual qualities.

For purposes of this program, socially disadvantaged groups are women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere.

---

## **Save Time – Make an Appointment with FSA**

As we roll out the Farm Bill programs administered by FSA, there will be related signups and in some cases multiple management decisions that need to be made by you, the producer, in consult with FSA staff. To insure maximum use of your time and to insure that you are afforded our full attention to your important business needs, please call our office ahead of your visit to set an appointment and to discuss any records or documentation that you may need to have with you when you arrive for your appointment. For local FSA Service Center contact information, please visit: <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app> .

---

## Interest Rates and Dates to Remember

Selected Interest Rates for November 2014		Dates to Remember	
90-Day Treasury Bill	.125%	Dec. 1	Last day to return voted County Committee ballots to the local FSA office
Farm Operating Loans — Direct	2.75%	Dec. 4	Farm Bill Workshop – Baltimore County UME office, Cockeysville, MD
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct	4.125%	Dec. 5	Extended deadline to enroll for 2014 & 2015 coverage for the Dairy Margin Protection Program
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.50%	Dec. 15	Deadline to report pasture, forage, and fall-seeded small grains
Emergency Loans	3.75%	Jan. 1	Newly elected county committee members take office
Farm Storage Facility Loans (7 years)	2.125%	Jan. 7	Farm Bill Workshop – Wor-Wic Community College, Salisbury, MD
Farm Storage Facility Loans (10 years)	2.375%	Jan. 8	Farm Bill Workshop – St. Mary's County Ag Center, Leonardtown, MD
Farm Storage Facility Loans (12 years)	2.500%		
Commodity Loans 1996-Present	1.125%		

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in any Farm Bill Workshop should contact the County Executive Director (CED) at the [local Farm Service Agency \(FSA\) office](#) or Federal Relay Service at [1-800-877-8339](tel:1-800-877-8339) by at least three days prior to the event.

---

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call [\(866\) 632-9992](tel:866-632-9992) (Toll-free Customer Service), [\(800\) 877-8339](tel:800-877-8339) (Local or Federal relay), [\(866\) 377-8642](tel:866-377-8642) (Relay voice users).