



**Wisconsin State
FSA Office**

For individual program information, please contact your local county office.

8030 Excelsior Dr.
Suite 100
Madison, WI 53717

Hours
Monday-Friday
8:00 am - 4:30 pm

**State Executive
Director**
Brad Pfaff

WI State Committee
Bill Averbeck, Chair
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Website
www.fsa.usda.gov/wi

**February 2012
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From the Desk of Brad Pfaff, Wisconsin State Executive Director

What an interesting winter this year has been. As I write this column, our state has received little snow or extremely cold weather. However, as spring approaches, I know that many of you are anxious to get in the fields.

This newsletter provides important information on a number of programs offered by the Farm Service Agency. FSA is again offering a Conservation Reserve Program general sign-up beginning March 12, 2012, and ending April 6, 2012. I encourage any landowner interested in the CRP program to contact their local office before April 6th for an appointment.

The ACRE/DCP sign-up continues until June 1, 2012. Producers must sign up annually to be eligible to receive benefits from ACRE and DCP. If you have not already signed up, please contact your county today as the sign-up deadline is fast approaching.

In addition, our farm loan program staff continues to remain busy providing agriculture with important credit through these difficult times.

On behalf of our entire staff, I want to thank you for your continued work in producing the food that feeds our nation and world.

FSA Announces CRP General Sign-up

A general sign-up for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) will begin on March 12, 2012, and continue through April 6, 2012. During the sign-up period, farmers and ranchers may offer eligible land for CRP's competitive general sign-up at their county Farm Service Agency (FSA) office.

Land currently not enrolled in CRP may be offered in this sign-up provided all eligibility requirements are met. Additionally, current CRP participants with contracts expiring on September 30, 2012, may make new contract offers. Contracts awarded under this sign-up are scheduled to become effective October 1, 2012.

FSA, which administers the CRP, will evaluate and rank eligible CRP offers using an Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) that shows the environmental benefits to be gained from enrolling the land in CRP. The EBI consists of five environmental factors (wildlife, water, soil, air and enduring benefits) and cost. Decisions on the EBI cutoff will be made after the sign-up ends

and after analyzing the EBI data of all the offers.

In addition to the general sign-up, CRP's continuous sign-up program will be ongoing. Continuous acres represent the most environmentally desirable and sensitive land. For more information, visit <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/crp>.

2012 DCP/ACRE Sign Up Now Available

As planning preparations for crop season 2012 get underway, Brad Pfaff, Wisconsin Farm Service Agency's State Executive Director, reminds producers that enrollment for the 2012 Direct and Counter-cyclical Program (DCP) and the Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) program will begin on January 23, 2012, and continue through June 1, 2012. This is the final year of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bill).

USDA computes DCP and ACRE direct payments using base acres and payment yields established for each farm. Payments will be issued in October to eligible

producers at rates established by statute regardless of market prices.

Annual contracts are required to be signed to receive program benefits. Producers are advised to contact the local office to set up appointments as soon as possible before the June 1, 2012, deadline.

All signatures must be obtained by the deadline for both the DCP and ACRE programs.

In all cases, it is the responsibility of the operator and owners of a farm to obtain and submit all necessary signatures on election and enrollment forms by the June 1, 2012, deadline.

For more information or to schedule an appointment to enroll in the DCP/ACRE programs, please contact the local county FSA office or visit <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>.

Non-Insured Assistance Program March 15th Application Deadline for Spring-seeded Crops Approaching

Producers are reminded that March 15, 2012, is the application deadline to sign up for the Non-Insured Assistance Program coverage on most spring-seeded crops.

Producers interested in obtaining NAP on their 2012 spring-seeded non-insurable crop acreage should visit their local county office as soon as possible to complete an application for 2012 acres. This deadline date also applies to persons who have a 2011 policy that expired and want to renew coverage for 2012.

NAP coverage is available for crops only where insurance coverage is not available under Federal Crop Insurance policies provided by private insurance agents.

NAP is designed to cover losses due to damaging weather conditions. The program covers losses of more than 50 percent of normal yields or the farm's yield calculated using actual production histories. Payments for production lost in excess of 50 percent are paid at 55 percent of the values established for the crop.

The cost per policy is \$250 per crop per producer with a \$750 cap per county. NAP coverage begins 30 days after the application is filed and the \$250 administrative fee has been paid. The \$250 administrative fee is non refundable. Producers that are considered limited resource under FSA provisions may have the service fees waived.

Producers who currently have NAP coverage or who are interested in coverage need to keep an accurate records of their production, report acreage of the crops to FSA annually, and promptly notify FSA when losses occur.

Additionally, in past USDA disaster programs, producers must meet the risk management purchase requirement by either obtaining a policy or plan of insurance, under the Federal Crop Insurance Act or NAP coverage. Coverage requirements vary slightly depending on the disaster program.

Producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office to obtain NAP coverage or for additional information on the NAP before the March 15, 2012 deadline. Information on the NAP program can also be found on FSA's website at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>

2011 Small Grains Marketing Assistance Loan Application Deadline Approaching

Producers interested in a Farm Service Agency Marketing Assistance Loan (MAL) are reminded that March 31, 2011, is the deadline to put 2011 small grain crops under a 9-month loan.

A MAL is available to producers who share in the risk of producing a crop. To be eligible, a producer must maintain continual beneficial interest in the crop from harvest through the earlier of the date the loan is repaid or Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) takes title of the commodity.

In addition, commodity loan eligibility requires compliance with conservation and wetland protection requirements; beneficial interest requirements, acreage reporting and ensuring that the commodity



meets CCC minimum grade and quality standards. The quality of the commodity in farm storage must be maintained throughout the term of the loan.

Violating provisions of a marketing assistance loan may trigger administrative actions, such as assessing liquidated damages, calling the loan and denial of future farm-stored loans.

For more information or to apply for a MAL, contact your county office at least a week prior to the time you would like the loan.

Farm Service Agency Offers SDA and Beginning Farmer Loans

Wisconsin Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Executive Director, Brad Pfaff, reminds interested applicants that Wisconsin FSA offers loans for farmers to purchase farmland and finance agricultural operations, with certain funding specifically targeted to Socially Disadvantaged (SDA) and beginning farmers.

The Wisconsin FSA, a national leader in farm loans, provided 640 loans to beginning or SDA farmers in fiscal year 2011. Wisconsin FSA also provided a total of 1,434 farm ownership and operating loans to Wisconsin farmers.

The Wisconsin FSA makes two different types of loans, direct and guaranteed. Farm ownership loans or farm operating loans may be obtained as direct loans for a maximum of up to \$300,000. Guaranteed loans, loans made by a commercial lender where FSA acts as guarantor, can reach a maximum indebtedness of \$1,214,000.

In addition to ownership and operating loans, Wisconsin FSA is now offering the Land Contract Guarantee Program which is designed to encourage farmers to sell their property to beginning and SDA farmers and ranchers through the use of seller financing.

SDA groups are Women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

For detailed information on loan eligibility or the different loan programs available,

contact your local FSA office to setup an appointment with a farm loan officer.

FSA Moving to Electronic Information

The USDA Wisconsin Farm Service Agency offices are moving toward a paperless operation.

Producers are asked to enroll in the new electronic mail system which will provide newsletters and electronic reminders instead of a hard copy through the mail.

FSA, like many other organizations, is trying to work smarter and be more efficient. Moving to electronic notifications via e-mail will help conserve resources and save taxpayer dollars.

County Committee ballots will continue to be mailed to all eligible producers.

Interested producers may sign-up to receive e-mail updates by contacting their local county FSA office.

FSA Offers Low Interest Farm Storage Facility Loans

FSA reminds producers who may be considering upgrading or adding extra storage space for harvested crops next year that the Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program provides low interest loans for building or upgrading storage facilities.

Filing an application early will ensure the project is completed in time before next summer or fall when additional storage may be needed. Producers interested in the program are encouraged to inquire about FSFL while in the county office signing up for the 2012 Direct and Counter-cyclical Program (DCP) and the Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) programs, which began January 23, 2012.

The maximum principal amount of a loan through FSFL has increased to \$500,000 per structure. Participants are required to provide a down payment of 15 percent, with CCC providing a loan for the remaining 85 percent of the net cost of the eligible storage facility and permanent drying and handling equipment. Loan terms of seven, 10 or 12 years are now available depending on the amount of the



loan. Interest rates for each loan term are different and are based on the rate which CCC borrows from the Treasury Department. Currently interest rates are 1.375 percent for a 7-year loan, 2.000 percent for a 10-year loan, and 2.250 for a 12-year loan, however interest rates change monthly. Once the loan is approved, the interest rate is locked for the length of the loan.

Applications for FSFL must be submitted to the FSA county office that maintains the farm's records. An FSFL must be approved before any site preparation or construction can begin.

The following commodities are eligible for farm storage facility loans:

- Corn, grain sorghum, soybeans, oats, wheat, barley or minor oilseeds harvested as whole grain
- Corn, grain sorghum, wheat, oats or barley harvested as other-than-whole grain
- Pulse crops – lentils, small chickpeas and dry peas
- Hay
- Renewable biomass
- Fruits (including nuts) and vegetables – cold storage facilities, but not freezers

For more information about FSFL, please visit your FSA county office or www.fsa.usda.gov.

FSA and RMA Monitor Crop Insurance

FSA is required to assist the Risk Management Agency (RMA) to improve the integrity of the Federal Crop Insurance Program through the prevention of fraud, waste and abuse.

FSA is required to monitor the crop insurance program, report problems to RMA and assist RMA and insurance providers when auditing certain claims. FSA offices are responsible for the oversight plan which includes close monitoring and oversight of the crop insurance program locally and growing season inspections on a selected number of insured producers. This plan also includes an expanded

exchange of data between FSA, RMA and local reinsured companies. Information provided to the FSA office and reinsured companies by insured producers will be reconciled in an effort to research and identify inconsistencies. FSA County Committees have the opportunity to suggest changes to the crop insurance program, but are not involved in the decision making process. FSA also assists RMA by gathering facts and reporting observations as they pertain to weather, crop plantings, maintenance and harvest. Producers who become aware of potential crop insurance abuse should report the information to the local FSA office.

Producers must insure they inform agents of entity changes in their farming operations and, changes in the risks and interests in the crops insured. FSA and RMA annually review discrepancies between records and found inconsistencies in a number of cases. These often resulted in the loss insurance benefits.

Paper Check Conversion Reminder

Producers are reminded that when paper checks are presented, either in person or through the mail, the checks will be converted into an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). The funds will be debited from the producer's account, usually within 24 hours of receipt. Please see the U.S. Department of Treasury legal notices posted in the county office or visit the following site for detailed information:

<https://www.pccotc.gov/pccotc/pcc/using-pcc/Legal%20Notices/legalnotices.htm>.

FSA's 2010 SURE Program Sign-up Now Available

Producers are reminded that Farm Service Agency's Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments (SURE) program sign-up for the 2010 crop year began November 14, 2011, and continues through June 1, 2012.

SURE provides assistance to farmers and ranchers who have suffered losses due to natural disasters. Producers suffering losses during the 2010 crop year are encouraged to visit their local FSA office to learn more about the SURE program.



To be eligible for SURE a farm must have:

- At least a 10 percent production loss adjusted for quality on a crop of economic significance;
- A policy or plan of insurance under the Federal Crop Insurance Act or the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) for all economically significant crops;
- Been physically located in a county that was declared a primary disaster county or contiguous county by the Agriculture Secretary under a Secretarial Disaster Designation. Without a Secretarial Disaster Designation, individual producers may be eligible if the actual production on the farm is less than 50 percent of the normal production on the farm due to a natural disaster.



In Wisconsin, the following counties were determined primary or contiguous for 2010:

| | |
|-------------|--------------|
| -Barron | -Buffalo |
| -Chippewa | -Clark |
| -Door | -Dunn |
| -Eau Claire | -Florence |
| -Forest | -Grant |
| -Green | -Jackson |
| -Kewaunee | -La Crosse |
| -Lafayette | -Langlade |
| -Lincoln | -Marathon |
| -Marinette | -Menominee |
| -Oconto | -Oneida |
| -Pepin | -Portage |
| -Price | -Rock |
| -Rusk | -Shawano |
| -Taylor | -Trempealeau |
| -Vilas | -Waupaca |
| -Wood | |

Producers considered socially disadvantaged, a beginning farmer or rancher, or a limited resource farmer may be eligible for SURE without a policy or plan of insurance or NAP coverage.

For more information on the 2010 SURE program or to schedule an appointment, contact your local county office.

Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation Compliance Reminder

Producers and landowners are reminded that they are required to have a conservation system in place on all highly erodible land (HEL). Wetland compliance is also required.

Renting new cropland, purchasing new land, breaking up additional land, changing crops, and changing or removing existing conservation practices can result in compliance issues.

Participants are encouraged to contact their local FSA county office before taking any of the above actions.

In addition, it is important that producers and landowners contact FSA before modifying, tiling, draining, dredging, filling or leveling any wetland or drainage ditches. Failure to obtain advance approval for any of these activities can result in loss of all federal payments and program eligibility.

Producers or land owners who would like more information or have questions about HEL can contact their local FSA County Offices or visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

CRP Participants of Primary Nesting Season Requirements

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) participants that maintenance and management activities on CRP acres must be completed outside of the primary nesting season, which begins May 15, 2012, and continues through the date listed in individual conservation plans.

CRP participants must not engage in any CRP maintenance or management activities during the primary nesting season that is listed in your current conservation plan.

Participants with maintenance issues that require attention prior to the end of nesting season must contact the county FSA office for permission prior to performing any spot spraying or spot mowing on CRP acres.

Failure to contact the county FSA office prior to any maintenance on CRP acres

during nesting season may result in payment reductions or possible contract termination.

For questions or more information about maintenance and management activities of CRP acres, please visit your local FSA county office or visit <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>.



FSA Financial Services Website Available to Producers

The Financial Services website is available for producers to conveniently view financial information and conduct FSA business. The website located at www.fsa.usda.gov/fmi is accessible to producers who have an e-Authentication Level 2 account.

Producers who do not currently have an account may register for an e-Authentication Level 2 account at www.eauth.egov.usda.gov.

The Financial Services website allows producers to view summary and detailed information about specific payments, collections, outstanding debt (excluding loans) and CCC-1099-G statements. This information can be helpful for record keeping and income tax preparation.

If you have any questions about accessing the Financial Services website or obtaining an e-Authentication Level 2 account, contact your local FSA county office.

Wisconsin Farm Loan Preferred Lender Program Participants

FSA's Preferred Lender Program was developed to reward experienced lenders by streamlining and adding flexibility to the loan application and servicing requirements, expediting loan approval and other FSA decisions, and allowing lenders to originate and service guaranteed loans the way they do other loans in their portfolio. Lenders with "preferred" status have broad authority in making and servicing FSA guaranteed loans and can utilize their own underwriting and servicing policies.

The Preferred Lending Program was implemented by the USDA 12 years ago

to simplify the agency's existing farm loan program by reducing the amount of paperwork required to apply for Federal Loan Guarantees.

Below is a list of current Preferred Lenders in Wisconsin.

| | |
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| Agstar Financial | Alpine Bank & Trust Company |
| Associated Bank, NA | Badgerland Financial |
| BMO Harris NA | Bremer Bank |
| Citizens State Bank of Loyal | Dubuque Bank & Trust Company |
| Farmers & Merchants Bank of Friesland | Farmers & Merchants Union Bank of Columbus |
| First National Bank & Trust Company - Beloit | Greenstone FCS |
| Investors Community Bank | Mound City Bank |
| Peshtigo National Bank | State Bank Financial - La Crosse |
| State Bank of Arcadia | Talmer Bank and Trust |
| Union Bank & Trust - Evansville | United Bank - Osseo |
| United FCS | Wisconsin Community Bank of Monroe |

Sign up Sooner, Not Later, for NRCS Conservation Programs

Many farmers don't realize that most USDA conservation programs are open for sign-up at any time, continuously, not just for a few weeks each year. Most of the programs offered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are open year-round for applications.

For example, you can make an appointment and sign-up for costsharing through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) at any time throughout the year at a time that is convenient for you. Applications are held until an annual ranking date is announced, then all applications that NRCS has received to date will be ranked for funding that year.

Frequently, the ranking dates are in the winter, and the snow cover makes it dif-

difficult for NRCS staff to get a good look at the land to see what practices are needed. Funding may not be available in the spring to add anything that was missed, but that can be avoided by signing up well in advance of the ranking date.

Call or email now for an appointment to talk about conservation options for your farm. More information on NRCS programs is available at www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov under Programs.



| Program Name | Sign-up |
|--|---|
| Environmental Quality Incentives Program | Open all year |
| Conservation Stewardship Program | Open all year |
| Wetlands Reserve Program | Open all year |
| Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program | Sign-up depends on local easement program |
| Grassland Reserve Program | Open all year |
| Conservation Technical Assistance | Available free at any time |
| Soils Information and Maps | Available free at any time |

tion on the farm. NRCS then uses audit data to develop energy conservation recommendations.

- Seasonal High Tunnel (Hoop house) Initiative: NRCS helps producers plan and implement high tunnels, steel-framed, polyethylene-covered structures that extend growing seasons in an environmentally safe manner. High tunnel benefits include better plant and soil quality, and less nutrient and pesticide use.

Organic, Energy and High Tunnels Offered through NRCS Special Initiative

Special sign-up opportunities are now open for Organic, On-Farm Energy, and Seasonal High Tunnel (hoop house) conservation practices. All three initiatives offer technical and financial assistance. Ranking dates will be March 30 and June 1, 2012. Applications must be received by these dates to be considered for funding in each round of ranking. Applicants need only apply once.

- Organic Initiative: NRCS helps certified organic growers and producers working toward organic certification to install conservation practices. Many practices are available in this initiative, including organic transition plan.
- On-Farm Energy Initiative: producers will develop an Ag Energy Management Plan to assess energy consump-

| Dates to Remember | |
|---|---|
| February 20, 2012 | Offices will be closed for Washington's Birthday |
| March 12, 2012 | CRP General Sign-up begins |
| March 15, 2012 | NAP application deadline for spring-seeded crops |
| March 31, 2012 | Deadline to apply for 9-month loans and LDPs for small grains, wheat and honey |
| April 6, 2012 | CRP General Sign-up deadline |
| June 1, 2012 | DCP/ACRE enrollment deadline |
| July 4, 2012 | Offices will be closed for Fourth of July |
| July 15, 2012 (Due to the 15th falling on a Sunday, the following Monday, July 16th, will be the last day) | -Deadline for NAP producers to certify 2011 crop production -Deadline to report 2012 crop acreages on spring seeded crops, forages, small grains, winter wheat and some perennial crops -Deadline to report production evidence for ACRE and PTPP 2011 crop acreage |
| June 1, 2012 | 2010 SURE Sign-up deadline |
| Continuous | -Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) continuous sign-up -CREP sign-up -SAFE sign-up -Farm Storage Facility Loans |

Civil Rights/Discrimination Complaint Process As a participant or applicant for programs or activities operated or sponsored by USDA you have a right to be treated fairly. If you believe you have been discriminated against because of your race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, you may file a discrimination complaint. The complaint should be filed with the USDA Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights within 180 days of the date you became aware of the alleged discrimination. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Stop 9410, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call toll-free at (866) 632-9992 (English) or (800) 877-8339 (TDD) or (866) 377-8642 (English Federal-relay) or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish Federal-relay). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.