

March 2013



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North Dakota FSA eNews

North Dakota State Office From the State Executive Director

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March madness - For some parts of North Dakota, spring is knocking on the door while in other parts of the state, winter has yet to loosen its grip. With that said, plans are being made for spring planting and many deadlines are fast approaching. March 15 is the closing date for federal crop insurance and NAP coverage with FSA. Sign-up has started for 2013 DCP and there will be a general CRP sign-up in May. My point is please read this newsletter to get important information and dates that may affect your farming and ranching operation. Have a great March and maybe watch some basketball.

-- Aaron Krauter, State Executive Director

2011 SURE Program

The sign-up for 2011 SURE runs through June 7, 2013. Producers who believe they may be eligible for a SURE program payment must contact their local county office for an appointment to determine eligibility.

The Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE) provides benefits for farm revenue losses due to natural disasters that incurred in the crop year 2011. SURE is available to eligible producers on:

- Farms in counties with Secretarial disaster declarations, including contiguous counties, that have incurred crop production or quality losses, or both, and includes all crops grown by a producer nationwide, except grazed crops.
- Any farm in which, for the crop year, the actual production on the farm because of disaster-related conditions is 50 percent or less than normal production of the farm.

For more information on the SURE program, please visit your local FSA county office or <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>.

2013 NAP

The Noninsured Assistance Program (NAP) provides financial assistance to eligible producers affected by a natural disaster. The program covers crops for which Federal Crop Insurance is not available. NAP covers losses greater than 50% of your expected production, based upon your approved yield and reported acreage. To apply for 2013 crop coverage, producers must complete a CCC-471 application for coverage and pay the service fee. The application and service fee must be filed by the applicable sales closing date. The service fee is \$250 per crop per county or \$750 per producer per county, not to exceed \$1875 per producer in all counties.

Producers must purchase NAP policies for all spring planted crops, including grass for hay and grazing, by the 2013 sales closing date of March 15, 2013.

2013 DCP / ACRE Program

The American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 extended the authorization of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the 2008 Farm Bill) for many Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) commodity, disaster, and conservation programs through 2013.

The extended programs include the Direct and Counter-Cyclical Payment Program (DCP) and the Average Crop Revenue Election Program (ACRE).

The 2013 DCP and ACRE program provisions are unchanged from 2012, except that all eligible participants in 2013 may choose to enroll in either DCP or ACRE for the 2013 crop year. This means that eligible producers who were enrolled in ACRE in 2012 may elect to enroll in DCP in 2013 or may re-enroll in ACRE in 2013 (and vice versa).

FSA began sign-ups for DCP and ACRE for the 2013 crops on Feb. 19, 2013. The ACRE signup period will end on June 3, 2013 and the DCP sign-up period will end on Aug. 2, 2013.

Advance payments are not authorized; final direct payments will be issued in October 2013. Fruit and Vegetable (FAV) planting restrictions apply on participating farms.

At sign up, producers are given or provided access to the CCC-509 Appendix to the signed contract. Paragraph 3P addresses payments and the subject of availability of funds. As indicated in this section of the Appendix, payments may be reduced due to a sequester order required by Congress. This means that ALL producers will be affected by the reduction if it occurs REGARDLESS of the date of sign-up.

Direct Microloans

FSA recently developed a Microloan (ML) program to better serve the unique operating needs of beginning, niche and the smallest of family farm operations by modifying its Operating Loan application, eligibility, and security requirements. The loan can be used for smaller farming operators such as specialty crop producers and operators of community supported agriculture (CSA). Microloans are direct farm operating loans with a shortened application process and reduced paperwork designed to meet the needs of smaller, non-traditional, and niche type operations. Apprentice and mentorship programs, non-farm business experience, and farm labor experience are acceptable alternative solutions for helping to meet farm experience and managerial requirements.

Operating loans may be used to purchase items such as:

- Livestock and feed
- Farm equipment
- Fuel, farm chemicals, insurance and other operating costs, including family living expenses
- Minor improvements or repairs to buildings
- Refinance certain farm-related debts, excluding real estate

Operating loan funds cannot be used to finance nonfarm enterprises, including earthworms, exotic birds, tropical fish, dogs or horses used for non-farm purposes (racing, pleasure, show and boarding). There is no minimum loan amount. The maximum loan amount for a Microloan is \$35,000. There is no down payment requirement. We encourage you to contact your local office or USDA Service Center to learn more about our Farm Loan Programs and the information you will need for a complete application.

USDA Announces 45th General Sign-Up for the Conservation Reserve Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will conduct a four-week general sign-up for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), beginning May 20 and ending on June 14. CRP has a 27-year legacy of protecting the nation's natural resources through voluntary participation, while providing significant economic and environmental benefits to rural communities across the United States.

Currently, about 27 million acres are enrolled in CRP. Producers that are accepted in the sign-up can receive cost-share assistance to plant long-term, resource-conserving covers and receive an annual rental payment for the length of the contract (10-15 years).

Contracts on 3.3 million acres of CRP are set to expire on Sept. 30, 2013. Producers with expiring contracts or producers with environmentally sensitive land are encouraged to evaluate their options under CRP.

Additional sign-ups for continuous CRP programs such as Highly Erodible Land Initiative and Initiative to Restore Grasslands, Wetlands and Wildlife will be announced in spring 2013.

For more information on CRP and other FSA programs, visit a local FSA service center or www.fsa.usda.gov.

Hispanic and Women Farmers and Ranchers Claims Must be Postmarked by March 25

Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers who allege discrimination by the USDA in past decades have fewer than 30 days remaining in the filing period closing March 25, 2013.

USDA urges potential claimants to contact the Claims Administrator for information and mail their claim packages on or before March 25, 2013.

The process offers a voluntary alternative to litigation for each Hispanic or female farmer and rancher who can prove that USDA denied his or her application for loan or loan servicing assistance for discriminatory reasons for certain time periods between 1981 and 2000.

As announced in February 2011, the voluntary claims process will make available at least \$1.33 billion for cash awards and tax relief payments, plus up to \$160 million in farm debt relief, to eligible Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers. There are no filing fees to participate in the program.

Call center representatives can be reached at 1-888-508-4429. Claimants may register for a claims package (by

calling the number or visiting the website) or may download the forms from the website. All those interested in learning more or receiving information about the claims process and claims packages are encouraged to attend meetings in your communities about the claims process and contact the website at any time or the call center telephone number Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern Time.

Website: www.farmerclaims.gov

Phone: 1-888-508-4429

Claims Period: September 24, 2012 - March 25, 2013.

Independent legal services companies will administer the claims process and adjudicate the claims. Although there are no filing fees to participate and a lawyer is not required to participate in the claims process, persons seeking legal advice may contact a lawyer or other legal services provider.

2012 Crop Year Commodity Loan Deadline

Producers planning to use the commodity loan program for their 2012 crops are reminded that March 31, 2013 is the deadline for filing applications for the following 2012 crops: wheat, barley, oats, canola, crambe, flaxseed, rapeseed, sesame seed and honey.

These loans carry a nine month maturity and can be repaid with cash at disbursement to loan maturity. To be eligible, producers must have produced an eligible loan commodity during for the applicable crop year, complied with annual program requirements, maintain beneficial interest (have title to the commodity and retain control of the commodity), request MAL on or before the final loan availability date for a specific commodity, and, if required, submit lien waivers for any liens existing on the crop for which MAL is being requested

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. The most common violations are removing or disposing of a commodity being used as loan collateral without prior authorization and providing an incorrect quantity certification.

Producers interested in a commodity loan on the above listed commodities should contact their local county FSA office staff prior to the March 31 deadline.

Commodity Loan Rates for 2013 – Wheat, Feed Grains, Pulse Crops and Oilseeds

County loan rates for the 2013 crops of wheat, corn, grain sorghum, barley, oats, soybeans, lentils, dry peas, chickpeas and other oilseeds (sunflower seed, flaxseed, canola, rapeseed, safflower, mustard seed, crambe and sesame seed) are posted on the Farm Service Agency (FSA) website at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport>

Repaying Commodity Loans by Wire Transfer

FSA accepts a variety of repayment methods when producer repay their commodity loans including cash, check, or bank wire transfer. A wire transfer is a financial transaction that producers make through their financial institution. It authorizes their bank to wire funds electronically from their account to Commodity Credit Corporations account at the Federal Reserve.

To make a commodity loan repayment by wire transfer, producers are first required to sign a Wire Transfer of Funds form CCC-258. This form will authorize their bank to automatically debit their account for a specific amount. This form can be obtained by contacting the FSA county office that services the commodity loan.

Change in Farming Operation

If you have bought or sold land, or if you have picked up or dropped rented land from your operation, make sure you report the changes to the office as soon as possible. You need to provide a copy of your deed or recorded land contract for purchased property. Failure to maintain accurate records with FSA on all land you have an interest in can lead to possible program ineligibility and penalties. Making the record changes now will save you time in the spring. Update signature authorization when changes in the operation occur. Producers are reminded to contact the office of a change in operations on a farm so that records can be kept current and accurate.

March Loan and Interest Rates

Operating Loans - 1.250%
Farm Ownership Loans - 3.250%
Farm Ownership - Down Payment Loans - 1.50%
Emergency - Amount of Actual Loss - 2.125%
Farm Storage Facility Loan, 7-Year - 1.375%
Farm Storage Facility Loan, 10-Year - 2.000%
Farm Storage Facility Loan, 12-Year - 2.250%
Commodity Loans - 1.125%

Important Dates and Deadlines

March 15, 2013 - 2013 Spring Planted and Forage Crop NAP Deadline

March 25, 2013 - Hispanic and Women Farmers and Ranchers Claims Deadline

March 31, 2013 - 2012 Crop Year Commodity Loan Deadline

May 20, 2013 - CRP 45th General Signup begins

June 3, 2013 - 2013 ACRE Election Deadline

June 7, 2013 - 2011 SURE Sign-up Ends

August 2, 2013 - 2013 DCP Sign-up Ends

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Stop 9410, Washington, DC 20250-9450, 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).