

June 2014



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North Dakota FSA eNews

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Farm Service Agency County Committee Nomination Period Begins June 15

The nomination period for local Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees begins Sunday, June 15, 2014.

To be eligible to serve on an FSA county committee, a person must participate or cooperate in a program administered by FSA, be eligible to vote in a county committee election and reside in the local administrative area where the person is nominated.

Farmers and ranchers may nominate themselves or others. 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 at www.fsa.usda.gov/elections. Nomination forms for the 2014 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA Service Center by close of business on Aug. 1, 2014. Elections will take place this fall.

While FSA county committees do not approve or deny farm ownership or operating loans, they make decisions on disaster and conservation programs, emergency programs, commodity price support loan programs and other agricultural issues. Members serve three-year terms. Nationwide, there are about 7,800 farmers and ranchers serving on FSA county committees. Committees consist of three to 11 members that are elected by eligible producers.

FSA will mail ballots to eligible voters beginning Nov. 3, 2014. Ballots are due back to the local county office either via mail or in person by Dec. 1, 2014. Newly elected committee members and alternates take office on Jan. 1, 2015.

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Restarting CRP Continuous Signup

Beginning June 9, 2014, FSA County Offices are authorized to begin accepting new offers under all CRP continuous, CREP, FWP and SAFE signup types. The authority for accepting Signup 46 offers expires on September 30, 2014.

Producers interested in offering land for enrollment in CRP should contact their local FSA Office.

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CRP 1-Year Contract Extensions

Beginning June 9, 2014, certain CRP participants with CRP contracts that are scheduled to expire on September 30, 2014, may extend all or part of the contract acreage for a 1-year period at the same payment rate. Contract extensions are only available for general signup contracts.

No general signup is scheduled for Fiscal Year 2014.

The signup period for the 1-year extension ends August 8, 2014.

Contracts ineligible to be extended for 1-year are those contracts that will exceed a total of 15 years. Therefore, contracts that were approved for contract lengths of 14 years and 1 month up to 15 years will NOT be eligible for the 1-year extension.

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Restart of Transition Incentive Program (TIP)

The 2014 Farm Bill authorized \$33 million (nationwide) for the voluntary transition of land enrolled under an expiring CRP contract from a retired or retiring owner or operator to a veteran or beginning farmer or rancher, or Socially Disadvantaged farmer or rancher to return the land to production for sustainable grazing or crop production.

Retired or retiring owners and operators who qualify under TIP may be eligible to receive annual rental payments for up to 2 additional years after the CRP-1 expiration date provided the transition is not to a family member.

Eligible retired or retiring owners and operators and veteran, beginning, or SDA farmers or ranchers may enroll in TIP on a continuous basis beginning June 9, 2014. To be considered eligible, enrollment in TIP must occur during the final year of the CRP contract.

North Dakota received an allotment of \$2.2 million in TIP funds. When this allotment has been reached, TIP enrollment will cease.

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Beginning Farmer Loans

FSA assists beginning farmers to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:

- Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years
- Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm
- Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA
- Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's average size farm.

Additional program information, loan applications, and other materials are available at your local USDA Service Center. You may also visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

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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.

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2014 Acreage Reporting

Acreage reports must be filed for all cropland on the farm before any 2014 Price Loss Coverage (PLC) or Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC) payments can be made or before eligibility can be established for marketing assistance loans and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP's). Participants in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the Non-insured Assistance Program (NAP) must report the specific acreage for which benefits are being requested.

The deadline for submitting a timely filed acreage report for the 2014 crop year is July 15, 2014. Producers are reminded that filing an accurate acreage report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage and prevented planting acreage, can prevent the loss of benefits for a variety of programs.

Producers who request prevented planting acreage credit must report the acreage and complete a CCC-576, Notice of Loss, within 15 calendar days after the final planting date for the respective crop as established by RMA or FSA. Producers must establish to the satisfaction of the County Committee that all cropland that was feasible to plant and prevented from being planted was affected by a natural disaster rather than a management decision. Additionally, producers are required to prove that preliminary efforts to plant the crop are evident, such as disking the land or orders for purchase or delivery of seed and fertilizer.

Producers requesting failed acreage credit must report the acreage before disposition of the crop to receive credit for that crop. The County Committee must be satisfied that the acreage was planted under normal conditions, but failed as a result of a natural disaster and not a management decision.

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Conservation Reserve Program

CRP participants are reminded to notify their local FSA County Office when there are ownership or operator changes on an applicable CRP contract. If there is a change in ownership, whether it is the result of a sale of land or death of a CRP participant, the successor to the CRP contract has 60 calendar days in which to complete the succession to the contract. It is very important that current CRP owners and/or operators inform their local FSA County Office timely of such changes so the County Office can update the CRP contract(s) so the annual rental payments can be issued to the correct participant.

Furthermore, CRP participants are to timely inform their local FSA County Office of any acreage that needs to be terminated from a CRP contract for activities such as oil well development, gravel pits, housing developments, and so on. CRP acreages that no longer provide approved vegetative cover must be terminated from the CRP contract and refunds of annual rental payments, SIP, PIP and cost-share payments may be required.

CRP participants are reminded that the period between April 15 and August 1 is the Primary Nesting and Brood Rearing Season (PNS). CRP acreages shall not be accessed during this time, as various types of wildlife are using the acreage to nest and/or raise their young. However, if weed control is necessary during this period, CRP participants must receive approval from the local FSA County Office prior to conducting spot-treatment. Only affected areas within the specific CRP field shall be accessed during the PNS to control weeds. All other maintenance activities shall take place outside of the PNS.

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Emergency Livestock Assistance Program – Honey Bees, Livestock and Farm-Raised Fish

For ELAP losses, such as honeybee colony collapse disorder (CCD), producers have until August 1, 2014 to complete a 2012 and/or 2013 application for payment and provide supporting documentation. For fiscal year 2014, the deadline to file an ELAP application for payment and provide supporting documentation is November 1, 2014.

ELAP covers losses suffered by livestock producers, honey bee producers and farm-raised fish producers that are not covered by the Livestock Indemnity Program or Livestock Forage Program. Eligible losses must have occurred in the same program year for which benefits are being requested. The ELAP program year is the fiscal year of October 1 through September 30.

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Commodity Loan Repayments

Outstanding commodity loans can be repaid at any time at principal plus interest. Market rate loan repayments can be made on nonrecourse loans prior to loan maturity, when the market repayment rate is less than principal plus interest. Currently, there are no commodities with a market repayment rate less than principal plus interest. Matured loans cannot be repaid at the market repayment rate.

If the sales proceeds are needed to repay the loan, a marketing authorization (CCC-681-1) can be requested. The request can either be made in person or by telephone. The terms of the marketing authorization can be either 15 or 30 calendar days. All parties who signed the note are responsible for repaying the loan. If the buyer does not repay the loan as required by the marketing authorization, CCC will make demand for repayment on the producers who signed the note. If a market repayment option is available, the option cannot be used after loan maturity or when the buyer does not remit repayment within 15 days of the expiration date of the marketing authorization.

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Farm Storage Facility Loan Program

The Farm Storage Facility Loan Program (FSFL) allows producers of eligible commodities to obtain low-interest financing to build or upgrade on-farm storage and handling facilities. The maximum principal amount of a loan through FSFL is \$500,000. Participants are required to provide a down payment of 15 percent, with CCC providing a loan for the remaining 85 percent of the eligible net cost of the storage facility and permanent drying and handling equipment. FSA requires additional security for all loans exceeding \$100,000 or when the aggregate amount of FSFL loans exceeds \$100,000. Loan terms of 7, 10 or 12 years are available depending on the amount of the loan. Interest rates for each term rate may be different and are based on the rate which CCC borrows from the Treasury Department. Sign-up for FSFL program is continuous as long as CCC funding is available. An FSFL loan must be approved before authorizing delivery of equipment or materials, site preparation, or construction. For more information about FSFL please visit your FSA county office or www.fsa.usda.gov.

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Bank Account Changes

Current FSA policy mandates that payments be electronically transferred into your bank account. In order for timely payments to be made, producers need to notify the FSA county office if your account has been changed or if another financial institution purchases your bank. Payments can be delayed if the FSA office is not aware of updates to your account and routing numbers.

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2013 ACRE Program – Farm Benchmark Yield Update

Producers who have a 2013 Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) program contract on one or more FSA farms, must complete the FSA-658 (Record of Production & Yield) for each ACRE farm and each covered commodity planted in 2013 no later than July 15, 2014.

Production evidence that can be used to support the certified yields can be from the following sources:

- Crop Insurance loss records
- Sales records (buyer specific)
- Crop Insurance APH data base records
- Farm stored production records, appraisals

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2014 Crop – NAP Notice of Loss

Producers with a NAP policy should file a notice of loss if they believe their crops have suffered a yield loss. In addition, if a producer is going to abandon a crop with NAP coverage, the crop must be appraised prior to destruction of the acreage to ensure coverage. Producers with NAP coverage on grazing land should also file a notice of loss if they have suffered a loss in grazing capacity on pastures.

A NAP payment will be made if a unit suffers a loss of production in excess of 50 percent. The payment rate for NAP is 55 percent of the established market price for the crop.

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2014 Farm Bill Webpage and Timeline

USDA recently awarded education funding for the creation of new online farm bill decision making tools. In addition to this forthcoming education, producers now have access to a preliminary website from FSA that gives them a chance to begin familiarizing themselves with the new programs and the type of information they will need to consider when deciding which program options work better for them. At this site, farmers and ranchers can view ARC and PLC projected payments, ARC guarantees, and PLC payment rate projections. These tables are available on the [FSA website](#).

In addition to the training funding USDA released a projected timeline for 2014 farm bill implementation:

- Mid-Summer 2014 - Producers receive letters notifying them of current bases and yields and 2009 to 2012 planting history.

- Late Summer 2014 - ARC and PLC online tools become available. Owners have opportunity to update yields and reallocate bases for ARC/PLC purposes.
- Winter 2014 - ARC/PLC one-time selections occur.
- Early 2015 - ARC/PLC sign-up for 2014 and 2015 starts.

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Important Dates and Deadlines

June 15 - County Committee Elections Nomination Period Begins

July 15 - Production Evidence Deadline for 2013 ACRE and NAP APH

July 15 - Acreage Reporting Deadline for 2014 Crop Year spring planted crops

August 1 - 2014 Land and Ownership Changes

August 1 - Last day to file County Committee Election Nomination Forms

August 8 - Deadline for 1 Year Extension of CRP Contracts

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June Loan and Interest Rates

Commodity Loans - 1.125%
Operating Loans - 2.250%
Farm Ownership Loans - 4.000%
Farm Ownership - Down Payment Loans - 1.50%
Emergency - Amount of Actual Loss - 3.250%
Farm Storage Facility Loan, 7-Year - 2.250%
Farm Storage Facility Loan, 10-Year - 2.625%
Farm Storage Facility Loan, 12-Year - 2.750%

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