

December 2015



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North Dakota FSA eNews

North Dakota Farm Service Agency

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- [From the State Executive Director](#)
- [Conservation Reserve Program General Signup Underway](#)
- [USDA Improves Access to Capital for Tribal Farmlands with Multiple Owners](#)
- [Livestock Indemnity Program – Deadlines Nearing](#)
- [Enrollment Period for 2016 USDA Safety Net Coverage Begins Dec. 7](#)
- [Farm Storage Facility Loan Program](#)
- [Marketing Assistance Loans](#)
- [Register to Use the FSA Financial Services Website](#)
- [Late-Filed Acreage Reports](#)
- [Important Dates and Deadlines](#)
- [December Loan and Interest Rates](#)

From the State Executive Director

It's December, its colder outside, some counties have snow and some don't, and producers are busy finalizing the 2015 growing season. North Dakota Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) has sent out the row crop yield surveys and this year you have the option of completing yours online. I checked it out and it is pretty slick, so don't procrastinate in completing the survey.

Your county offices are busy making final 2014 ARC/PLC payments and taking applications for the 49th General CRP. If you ever have any questions, please give your county office a call.

Have a blessed season!

-Aaron Krauter, State Executive Director

Conservation Reserve Program General Signup Underway

The general enrollment period for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) began Dec. 1, 2015, and ends on Feb. 26, 2016. December 2015 also marks the 30th anniversary of CRP, a federally funded program that assists agricultural producers with the cost of restoring, enhancing and protecting certain grasses, shrubs and trees to improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and reduce loss of wildlife habitat.

Participants in CRP establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as “covers”) to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat on marginally productive agricultural lands. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. At times when commodity prices are low, enrolling sensitive lands in CRP can be especially attractive to farmers and ranchers, as it softens the economic hardship for landowners at the same time that it provides ecological benefits. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years. The long-term goal of the program is to re-establish native plant species on marginal agricultural lands for the primary purpose of preventing soil erosion and improving water quality and related benefits of reducing loss of wildlife habitat.

In addition to General Signup 49, producers can also submit offers for continuous signup practices, such as field windbreaks, shelterbelts, grassed waterways, saline soils, filter strips, riparian buffers, duck nesting habitat, farmable wetland restoration, and SAFE projects. Some practices have limited acreages available for enrollment and contracts are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.

[Back to top](#)

USDA Improves Access to Capital for Tribal Farmlands with Multiple Owners

USDA is expanding the availability of farm loans for Indian tribes and members to purchase tribal farmland that has multiple owners. The improved lending opportunities are possible due to new authority granted by the 2014 Farm Bill, which allows USDA to provide revolving loan funds to qualified intermediary lenders that can relend the funds to qualified tribes and individuals. The program is available as of December 1, 2015.

As a direct result of more than a dozen tribal meetings across the country, USDA is able to implement a solution to a longstanding barrier to financing, which will increase the availability of farm loans to Native Americans who want to start or expand a farming or ranching operation on Indian lands.

Under the 1887 Dawes Act, Indian reservation land was divided and allotted to individual tribal members such that with the passing of each generation, title ownership was divided and parceled among heirs, while the land was not. As a result, land once owned by a single person could today be owned by hundreds or thousands of individuals, resulting in what is known as “highly fractionated Indian land.” In many instances, landowners are unknown or cannot be located, which complicates the coordination of ownership or prevents the use of the property altogether. There are more than 245,000 owners of three million fractionated land interests, spanning approximately 150 Indian reservations.

Under the rules published today, USDA will now allow tribes and tribal members to submit a farm loan application to an intermediary lender. To participate, intermediary lenders first must be approved by USDA. The lenders may be private and tribal nonprofit corporations, public agencies, Indian tribes, or lenders subject to federal or state regulation (such as a credit union or other financial institution). FSA will lend to the intermediary, which will relend to the applicant. The intermediary lender also will administer the loan for the applicant.

Additional information on guidelines and criteria for intermediate lenders and how to file a loan application under Highly Fractionated Indian Land loan program will be shared Dec. 7, 2015 at the Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) meeting and Tribal consultation in Las Vegas, Nev. For more information, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans or contact the local FSA county office. To find the local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

USDA also has opened a 90-day period for the public to submit comments on this program. Written comments must be submitted by Feb. 29, 2016, at www.regulations.gov, using Regulation Identifier Number 0560-AI32.

[Back to top](#)

Livestock Indemnity Program – Deadlines Nearing

The deadline to file an application for 2015 Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) is January 30, 2016. Producers who suffered livestock deaths due to adverse weather from January 1, 2015 through December 31, 2015 may submit a notice of loss and application for payment with their local FSA County Office by the January 30, 2016 deadline. Eligible adverse weather events include, but are not limited to, earthquake, hail, lightning, tornado, winter storm (lasting 3 consecutive days with high winds, freezing rain/sleet, heavy snowfall and extremely cold temperatures), floods, blizzards, wild fires, extreme heat, extreme cold, anthrax, straight-line winds, and cyanobacteria (blue-green algae poisoning) that directly results in the death of eligible livestock in excess of normal mortality.

For 2015 livestock deaths, the notice of loss MUST have been filed with the local FSA office within 30 calendar days from when the loss was apparent. Livestock producers suffering livestock losses may submit the notice of loss by phone, fax, and email or in person.

Livestock producers must provide proof of death and inventory numbers of eligible livestock that died due to an eligible adverse weather event. The inventory numbers represent the number of eligible livestock before and after the adverse weather event(s) that cause the death of the livestock. Beginning and ending inventory documents can include veterinary records, balance sheets, inventory numbers used for tax purposes, loan records, sales and purchase records and other similar documents. Proof of death documentation may be rendering truck receipts, FEMA records, veterinary records, private insurance documents, contemporaneous records that existed at the time of the weather event(s), pictures with a date, and other similar documents.

[Back to top](#)

Enrollment Period for 2016 USDA Safety Net Coverage Begins Dec. 7

Farm Service Agency (FSA) has announced that producers who chose coverage from the safety net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill, known as the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, can begin visiting FSA county offices starting Dec. 7, 2015,

to sign contracts to enroll in coverage for 2016. The enrollment period will continue until Aug. 1, 2016.

Although the choice between ARC and PLC is completed and remains in effect through 2018, producers must still enroll their farm by signing a contract each year to receive coverage.

Producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office to schedule an appointment to enroll. If a farm is not enrolled during the 2016 enrollment period, producers on that farm will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs should crop prices or farm revenues fall below the historical price or revenue benchmarks established by the program.

The two programs were authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill and offer a safety net to agricultural producers when there is a substantial drop in prices or revenues for covered commodities. 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 and sweet rice), safflower seed, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat. Upland cotton is no longer a covered commodity. For more details regarding these programs, go to www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.

For more information, producers are encouraged to visit their local FSA office. To find a local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

[Back to top](#)

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 the FSFL program is continuous throughout the year. All requests for FSFL prior to loan approval require a site inspection for an environmental assessment in accordance to National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) requirements showing no adverse impacts. FSFL policy requires the following actions cannot occur at the proposed FSFL location prior to the environmental assessment being completed:

- accepting delivery of equipment and/or materials in previously undisturbed areas
- site preparation or foundation construction in previously undisturbed areas
- no alteration to any structures that are 50 years old or older or within a historic district

If any of the above are completed prior to FSA completing the on-site assessment may impede the completion of the environmental assessment and eligibility for the FSFL.

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

[Back to top](#)

Marketing Assistance Loans

USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation makes available nonrecourse marketing assistance loans on certain crop year 2015 commodities. These loans can be requested by mail, via fax, or in person by properly completing the loan application (CCC-666). Loan applications are available at all county FSA offices and online at: <http://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov/eForms/>

Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) provide financing and marketing assistance for wheat, feed grains, soybeans, other oilseeds, pulse crops, wool and honey. MALs provide producers interim financing after harvest to help meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities at harvest. A commodity loan application must be filed at the county office that maintains the farm records for the farm that produced the commodity for the loan. The 2015 crop commodity loan rates are available at any county FSA office, or online at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov> and clicking on the "Price Support" link.

Producers intending to receive a commodity loan disbursement prior to the end of the calendar year must contact your local County Office in early December to schedule an appointment.

[Back to top](#)

Register to Use the FSA Financial Services Website

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) Financial Services Website allows producers to generate reports that show both current and historical financial information. Once a producer has signed up for an e-Authentication Level 2 account, the producer will have access to the Financial Services Website. Sign-up for an e-Authentication Level 2 account at FSA web site: www.eauth.egov.usda.gov When obtaining a Level 2 account, you must complete a customer profile and submit online. Once your customer profile is submitted, you will receive a confirmation e-mail, and you must respond to it within 7 days to activate your account. Once completed, you must complete the "Identity Proofing" process by visiting a local USDA Service Center and presenting a photo ID, such as your driver's license.

[Back to top](#)

Late-Filed Acreage Reports

The deadline for timely filing an acreage report in North Dakota for the 2015 program year was July 15, 2015. In addition, November 15, 2015 was the deadline for submitting acreage reports for fall-seeded small grains, PRF, and perennial forage for the 2016 crop year. Acreage reports must be filed for all cropland on the farm before any ARC or PLC payments can be issued. For marketing assistance loans and LDP's, all cropland on the farm on which the crop pledged as loan collateral must be reported. Additionally, participants of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the Non-insured Assistance Program (NAP) must report the specific acreage for which benefits are being requested.

Although the aforementioned reporting deadlines have passed, county offices will accept late-filed acreage reports providing certain criteria are met, including the assessment of late-filed fees. Contact your local county office for additional information relative to late-filed acreage reports.

[Back to top](#)

Important Dates and Deadlines

February 26 - CRP General Signup 49 Deadline

December 7 - Last day to return county committee ballots to FSA County Office

December 7 - 2016 ARC-PLC Enrollment Period Begins

January 1 - Newly elected county committee members take office

January 30 - 2015 Livestock Indemnity Program Application Deadline

[Back to top](#)

December Loan and Interest Rates

Commodity Loans -1.375%

Operating Loans - 2.375%

Farm Ownership Loans - 3.750%

Farm Ownership - Down Payment Loans - 1.50%

Emergency - Amount of Actual Loss -3.375%

Farm Storage Facility Loan, 7-Year - 2.000%

Farm Storage Facility Loan, 10-Year - 2.250%

Farm Storage Facility Loan, 12-Year - 2.375%

[Back to top](#)

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