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North Dakota FSA eNews

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From the State Executive Director

March has come in like a lamb and many weather forecasters are indicating that lamb will probably be around awhile.

Your FSA offices just finished up a General CRP sign-up and are waiting for the national results. March 15 is the final closing date for Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) insurance. So if you have some non-traditional crops that are not covered by crop insurance check us out for your risk protection. Also, if you have not signed the 2016 ARC/PLC contract take time to stop in before you get busy in the field.

Have a good one and think safety!

Aaron Krauter, State Executive Director

USDA Provides Greater Protection for Fruit, Vegetable and Other Specialty Crop Growers

Greater protection is now available from the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) for crops that traditionally have been ineligible for federal crop insurance. The new options, created by the 2014 Farm Bill, provide greater coverage for losses when natural disasters affect specialty crops such as vegetables, fruits, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, and energy crops. The NAP deadline for spring planted and forage crops is March 15, 2016.

Previously, the program offered coverage at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production. Producers can now choose higher levels of coverage, up to 65 percent of their expected production at 100 percent of the average market price.

The expanded protection will be especially helpful to beginning and traditionally underserved producers, as well as farmers with limited resources, who will receive fee waivers and premium reductions for expanded coverage. More crops are now eligible for the program, including expanded aquaculture production practices, and sweet and biomass sorghum. For the first time, a range of crops used to produce bioenergy will be eligible as well.

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Non-Irrigated Corn for Grain Coverage Available Under NAP Program

NAP coverage for non-irrigated corn for grain in eight western North Dakota counties is now available beginning with the 2016 crop year. Counties affected by the change in coverage are: Billings, Bowman, Burke, Divide, Golden Valley, McKenzie, Slope and Williams.

The application deadline for the 2016 NAP coverage for all non-insurable spring planted and forage crops, including grass for hay and grazing is March 15, 2016.

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 your county FSA office as soon as possible. When making ownership changes please provide a copy of the land deed or recorded land contract for purchased property. A reminder that the failure to maintain accurate farm records with FSA on all land you have an interest in can cause potential loss of program eligibility.

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Emergency Livestock Disaster Programs

Livestock producers, including Honeybee and Farm-raised Fish producers, are reminded that the 2016 Emergency Livestock Disaster Program (ELAP) program year began October 1, 2015 and continues through September 30, 2016.

Producers who suffer livestock losses not covered under LIP, or losses of eligible stored feed stocks, colony-collapse disorder, etc, are reminded to report these losses within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent. In addition to filing a notice of loss, a timely filed acreage report for the 2016 program year must also be submitted with the administrative FSA county office. For Honeybee producers who have become aware of colony collapse while in another state, the notice of loss can be filed with the local FSA office in that state.

After producers have timely filed their notice of loss and acreage report, the next step is to make the application for payment. This step must be completed no later than November 1, 2016. Since ELAP funds are limited to \$20 million per fiscal year, the national office must determine if the requested ELAP payments exceed the \$20 million allocation. If the requested 2016 ELAP benefits exceed \$20 million, all payments will be factored.

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Conservation Reserve Program

FSA County Offices are taking offers for various Continuous CRP practices at this time. Under a Continuous CRP signup, the effective start date of the contract can be delayed by up to 6 months. Therefore, if a Continuous CRP contract were to start on April 1, the producer could delay the start date to October 1st. However, under this delayed start date provision, no growing crops can be on the land that is to be enrolled in CRP on the date the contract becomes effective. There are no exceptions to this provision.

Also, since the effective start date can be delayed up to 6 months, producers with CRP contracts expiring on September 30, 2016, can now submit offers to re-enroll existing CRP acreage under Continuous CRP signup #48. Eligibility for re-enrollment will depend on location for certain practices.

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Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation Compliance

Landowners and operators are reminded that in order to receive payments, compliance with Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELCS) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions are required. Farmers with HEL soils need to be aware of tillage, crop residue, and rotation requirements as specified in your conservation plan. Contact NRCS if you have any questions about your conservation plan. Don't wait until after you plowed the ground to find out you are out of compliance.

Also, it is very important that you contact NRCS or FSA before modifying (tiling, draining, dredging, filling or leveling) any wetland or drainage ditch. Failure to obtain advance approval for any of these situations can result in a loss of USDA program benefits.

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FSA Assists RMA

FSA county office staff will be assisting Risk Management Agency and insurance providers in monitoring crop conditions throughout the growing season. FSA staff will be making two inspections; one during the growing season and one during the time harvest is normal for the crop.

The staff will be checking to see if reported crops have been planted and cared for in a workmanlike manner. All suspected cases of fraud, waste, and abuse of the Federal Crop Insurance Program will be referred to RMA.

Producers may report suspected cases of fraud, waste, and abuse to the county office staff, RMA office or Office of Inspector General. Additionally, FSA will assist RMA with auditing claims.

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Financing Statements for Marketing Assistance Loans and the Farm Storage Facility Loan Program

Producers applying for a Marketing Assistance Loan (MAL) or Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) acknowledge that USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) will take a security interest in the collateral to secure payment of any loan being made or to be made. CCC files a UCC-1 financing statement to perfect its security interest in such collateral.

The ND Secretary of State launched a new Central Indexing System (CIS) on March 1st, which allows lien searches and lien filings to be conducted electronically by FSA when processing a CCC loan request.

When FSA determines a UCC-1 is required, County FSA Offices will now be requiring loan applicants to submit payment of \$40 payable to the ND Secretary of State at the time of loan application. Once the UCC has been recorded in CIS, FSA will later reimburse the loan applicant their \$40 UCC filing fee previously collected.

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2015 Crop Year Commodity Loan Deadline

Producers planning to use the commodity loan program for their 2015 crops are reminded that March 31, 2016, is the deadline for filing applications for the following 2015 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 the applicable crop year, complied with annual program requirements, maintain beneficial interest (have title to the commodity and retain control of the commodity), request marketing assistance loan (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.

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. The 2015 crop commodity loan rates are available at any county FSA office, or online at:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA> and clicking on the "Price Support" link.

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 FSA authorization and providing an incorrect quantity certification.

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Emergency Loans

Producers with operations in counties that have been declared Presidential Disaster Areas or designated as a disaster area by the Secretary of Agriculture or in a contiguous county are eligible to apply for low interest emergency loans.

Emergency loans help producers recover from production and physical losses due to drought, flooding and other natural disasters or quarantine.

Producers have eight months from the date of the declaration to apply for emergency loan assistance. FSA will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability. Producers can borrow up to 100 percent of actual production or physical losses, to a maximum amount of \$500,000. The current emergency loan interest rate is 3.625 percent.

Producers with operations in counties that received a disaster designation could be eligible for emergency loan assistance if they suffered at least a 30 percent loss in crop production or a physical loss to livestock, livestock products, real estate or chattel property.

For more information about emergency loans, please contact your local FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

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USDA Regional Climate Change Hubs

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack established the first ever USDA Regional Climate Change Hubs in February 2014 at seven locations around the country to provide more information to farmers, ranchers and forest landowners on the increasing risks of fires, pests, floods, and droughts associated with a changing climate.

For more information on the Northern Plains Regional Climate Hub, visit <http://climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/northernplains>.

For general information on Climate Hubs, visit <http://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/sites/default/files/USDA%20Regional%20Hubs%20for%20Risk%20Adaptation%20and%20Mitigation%20to%20Climate%20Change%202015.pdf>

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Important Dates and Deadlines

March 15 - NAP Coverage Deadline - Sprint Planted and Forage Crops

March 31 - Application Deadline for 2015 Crop Year Commodity Loans

July 15 - Acreage Reporting Deadline for 2016 Crop Year

August 1 - 2016 ARCPLC Signup Deadline

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March Loan and Interest Rates

Commodity Loans - 1.500%

Operating Loans - 2.625%

Farm Ownership Loans - 3.750%

Farm Ownership - Down Payment Loans - 1.50%

Emergency - Amount of Actual Loss - 3.625%

Farm Storage Facility Loan, 7-Year - 1.625%

Farm Storage Facility Loan, 10-Year - 1.875%

Farm Storage Facility Loan, 12-Year - 2.000%

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