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Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Louisiana FSA Newsletter

Louisiana Farm Service Agency

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Message from Craig A. McCain, FSA State Executive Director

It's here again!! That wonderful season where those who have planted by faith and nurtured with hard work begin to harvest the results. Statewide, I am hearing very optimistic crop reports and by all accounts, it appears that we have a great opportunity regarding the 2020 crop. We are hopeful for favorable weather throughout harvest.

I want to remind anyone who has interest in CFAP, which is designed to mitigate the effects of COVID on eligible agricultural commodities, that applications must be submitted to FSA by August 28, 2020. A list of eligible commodities along with other information can be found at www.farmers.gov/coronavirus. Anyone who has interest in additional commodities being added to this program are

Next State Committee Meeting:

To be determined

Please contact your local FSA Office for questions specific to your operation or parish.

To find contact information for your local office go to www.fsa.usda.gov/la

Do Right and Feed Everyone!

reminded that USDA is currently evaluating requests for additional commodities which were submitted thru the NOFA process.

FSA is also working to process WHIP+ applications which have been filed for 2018 and/or 2019 crop losses resulting from weather related disasters such as drought, hurricanes, flooding or excessive moisture. If you have interest in this program, you are encouraged to contact your local County Office for more information or to make an application.

Lastly, we recognize that harvest season is a hectic, long and sometimes stressful time on the farm. We respect that as a fact, but FSA has had an equally long, hectic and difficult year, and it's not nearly over. We need your full cooperation regarding completing your program and loan applications while dealing with the ongoing pandemic. While things haven't been easy on the farm or in the office, working together we will be successful!

As always, thank you for doing right and for feeding everyone!

Upcoming Important Dates

- **Aug. 28** is the last day to apply for CFAP
- **Sept. 1** Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) Premium Balance Due
- **Sept. 7** USDA Service Centers will be closed in observance of the Labor Day Holiday
- **Sept. 30** PLC Yield update deadline
- **Oct. 13** enrollment for 2021 DMC program begins
- **Nov. 2** County Committee election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters
- **Ongoing into 2020** is the signup period for WHIP+

Louisiana FSA now offers SMS texting; receive text message alerts on your cell phone regarding important deadlines, reporting requirements and updates. Contact your local FSA Office for more information.

More information on the CFAP process is available on farmers.gov/cfap or call 877-508-8364.

USDA Stands Up New Team to Better Serve Beginning Farmers and Ranchers in Louisiana

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is standing up a new team that will lead a department-wide effort focused on serving beginning farmers and ranchers.

To institutionalize support for beginning farmers and ranchers and to build upon prior agency work, the 2018 Farm Bill directed USDA to create a national coordinator position in the agency and state-level coordinators for four of its agencies – Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Risk Management Agency (RMA), and Rural Development (RD).

Derrick Johnson was selected as the USDA Beginning Farmer Rancher state coordinator in Louisiana. Derrick currently works as a Risk Management Specialist with the Risk Management Agency and has worked 17 years for USDA. He also runs his family's vegetable farm in southern Mississippi.

Others on the team coordinating Louisiana's beginning farmer and rancher efforts include, Ervin Norwood, Program Technician with the Farm Service Agency; Stephanie Paul, District Conservationist with the Natural Resource Conservation Service; and Lee Jones, Assistant to the State Director with Rural Development. This is a collateral duty for all team members.

Each state coordinator will receive training and develop tailored beginning farmer outreach plans for their state. Coordinators will help field employees better reach and serve beginning farmers and ranchers and will also be available to assist beginning farmers who need help navigating the variety of resources USDA has to offer.

More on Beginning Farmers

Twenty-seven percent of farmers were categorized as new and beginning producers, with 10 years or less of experience in agriculture, according to the 2017 Census of Agriculture.

USDA offers a variety of farm loan, risk management, disaster assistance, and conservation programs to support farmers, including beginning farmers and ranchers. Additionally, a number of these programs have provisions specifically for beginning farmers, including targeted funding for loans and conservation programs as well as waivers and exemptions.

More Information

Learn more about USDA's resources for beginning farmers as well as more information on the national and state-level coordinators at farmers.gov/newfarmers. For more information on available programs in your area, contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

One-Time PLC Yield Updates – Deadline September 30

Farm owners have a one-time opportunity to update PLC yields of covered commodities on the farm, regardless of Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program election. The deadline to request a PLC yield update is September 30, 2020.

The updated yield will be equal to 90 percent of the average yield per planted acre in crop years 2013-2017 (excluding any year where the applicable covered commodity was not planted), subject to the ratio obtained by dividing the 2008-2012 average national yield by the 2013-2017 average national yield for the covered commodity. If the reported yield in any year is less than 75 percent of the 2013-2017 average county yield, then the yield will be substituted with 75 percent of the county average yield.

The chart below provides the ratio obtained by dividing the 2008-2012 average national yield by the 2013-2017 average national yield for each covered commodity.

It is the owner's choice whether to update or keep existing PLC yields. If a yield update is not made, then no action is required to maintain the existing PLC yield. An existing or updated PLC yield will be maintained and effective for crop years 2020 through 2023 (life of the 2018 Farm Bill).

PLC yields may be updated on a covered commodity-by-covered commodity basis using FSA form [CCC-867](#).

For more information, reference resources and decision tools, visit [farmers.gov/arc-plc](#). Contact your local Farm Service Agency Office for assistance – [farmers.gov/service-center-locator](#).

FSA Reminds Producers of Ongoing Disaster Assistance Program Signup

USDA has started making payments through the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program – Plus (WHIP+) to agricultural producers who suffered eligible losses because of drought or excess moisture in 2018 and 2019. Signup for these causes of loss opened March 23, and producers who suffered losses from drought (in counties designated D3 or above), excess moisture, hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, typhoons, volcanic activity, snowstorms or wildfires can still apply for assistance through WHIP+.

To be eligible for WHIP+, producers must have suffered losses of certain crops, trees, bushes or vines in counties with a Presidential Emergency Disaster Declaration or a Secretarial Disaster Designation (primary counties only) for qualifying natural disaster events that occurred in calendar years 2018 or 2019. Also, losses located in a county not designated by the Secretary as a primary county may be eligible if a producer provides documentation showing that the loss was due to a qualifying natural disaster event.

For losses due to drought, a producer is eligible if any area of the county in which the loss occurred was rated D3, or extreme drought, or higher on the U.S. Drought Monitor during calendar years 2018 or 2019. Producers who suffered losses should contact their FSA county office.

In addition to the recently added eligible losses of drought and excess moisture, FSA will implement a WHIP+ provision for crop quality loss that resulted in price deductions or penalties when marketing crops were damaged by eligible disaster events. To ensure an effective program for all impacted farmers, the Agency is currently gathering information on the extent of quality loss from producers and stakeholder organizations.

USDA Service Centers, including FSA county offices, are open for business by phone only, and field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. While program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with producers by phone and using online tools whenever possible. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other Service Center agency are required to call their Service Center to schedule a phone appointment. More information on Service Centers can be found at [farmers.gov/coronavirus](#), and more information on WHIP+ can be found at [farmers.gov/whip-plus](#).

USDA Reminds Louisiana Producers to Complete Crop Acreage Reports

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds Louisiana producers to complete [crop acreage reports](#) by the applicable deadline for their county. Acreage reporting dates vary by crop and by county. Contact your FSA county office for a list of acreage reporting deadlines by crop.

The following acreage reporting dates are applicable in Louisiana

July 15, 2020 - most spring seeded crops

Due to the pandemic, FSA has implemented acreage reporting flexibilities. FSA can work with producers to file timely acreage reports by phone, email, online tools and virtual meetings.

FSA offices are using Microsoft Teams software to virtually meet with producers to review maps and documents for certification. Producers who want to schedule a virtual appointment can download the Microsoft Teams app on their smart phone or tablet and call the FSA office for an appointment. You can also use Microsoft Teams from your personal computer without downloading software.

The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the acreage reporting date, the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer has not timely filed an acreage report, the producer may file the acreage report within 30 days of the acreage reporting date. Because of the pandemic, late fees will be waived if filed within the 30 days.

FSA is also providing additional flexibilities for producers to file on acres with failed crops or crops that were prevented from planting because of extreme weather events. For insured crops, producers who timely filed a prevented planted claim with the reinsurance company but filed a *Notice of Loss* (CCC-576) form after the deadline will be considered timely filed for FSA purposes. For uninsured crops, producers may start a *Notice of Loss* by calling their FSA county office.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP-covered crops is the earlier of the dates listed above or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

When producers are working with FSA staff – either in-person or virtually – they can also take care of applications for other FSA programs, including the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program. A CFAP Call Center is available for producers who would like additional one-on-one support with the CFAP application process. Please call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance. The CFAP Call Center can provide service to non-English speaking customers. Customers will select 1 for English and 2 to speak with a Spanish speaking employee. For other languages, customers select 1 and indicate their language to the Call Center staff.

Applications can also be submitted for the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus for 2018 and 2019 as well as other disaster assistance programs that may be able to assist producers at this time.

For questions, contact your local USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Environmental Review Required Before Project Implementation

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires Federal agencies to consider all potential environmental impacts for federally-funded projects before the project is approved.

For all Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs, an environmental review must be completed before actions are approved, such as site preparation or ground disturbance. These programs include, **but are not limited to**, the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program and farm loans. If project implementation begins before FSA has completed an environmental review, the request will be denied. Although there are exceptions regarding the Stafford Act and emergencies, it's important to wait until you receive written approval of your project proposal before starting any actions.

Applications cannot be approved until FSA has copies of all permits and plans. Contact your local FSA office early in your planning process to determine what level of environmental review is required for your program application so that it can be completed timely.

Obtaining Payments due to Deceased Producers

In order to claim a Farm Service Agency (FSA) payment on behalf of a deceased producer, all program conditions for the payment must have been met before the applicable producer's date of death.

If a producer earned a FSA payment prior to his or her death, the following is the order of precedence for the representatives of the producer:

- administrator or executor of the estate
- the surviving spouse
- surviving sons and daughters, including adopted children
- surviving father and mother
- surviving brothers and sisters
- heirs of the deceased person who would be entitled to payment according to the State law

For FSA to release the payment, the legal representative of the deceased producer must file a form FSA-325 to claim the payment for themselves or an estate. The county office will verify that the application, contract, loan agreement, or other similar form requesting payment issuance, was signed by the applicable deadline by the deceased or a person legally authorized to act on their behalf at that time of application.

If the application, contract or loan agreement form was signed by someone other than the deceased participant, FSA will determine whether the person submitting the form has the legal authority to submit the form.

Payments will be issued to the respective representative's name using the deceased program participant's tax identification number. Payments made to representatives are subject to offset regulations for debts owed by the deceased.

FSA is not responsible for advising persons in obtaining legal advice on how to obtain program benefits that may be due to a participant who has died, disappeared or who has been declared incompetent.

Applying for Farm Storage Facility Loans

The Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program provides low-interest financing to help you build or upgrade storage facilities and to purchase portable (new or used) structures, equipment and storage and handling trucks.

Eligible commodities include corn, grain sorghum, rice, soybeans, oats, peanuts, wheat, barley, minor oilseeds harvested as whole grain, pulse crops (lentils, chickpeas and dry peas), hay, honey, renewable biomass, fruits, nuts and vegetables for cold storage facilities, floriculture, hops, maple sap, rye, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, meat and poultry (unprocessed), eggs, and aquaculture (excluding systems that maintain live animals through uptake and discharge of water). Qualified facilities include grain bins, hay barns and cold storage facilities for eligible commodities.

Loans up to \$50,000 can be secured by a promissory note/security agreement, loans between \$50,000 and \$100,000 may require additional security, and loans exceeding \$100,000 require additional security.

You do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply. The loans are designed to assist a diverse range of farming operations, including small and mid-sized businesses, new farmers, operations supplying local food and farmers markets, non-traditional farm products, and underserved producers.

For more information, contact your local USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport.

USDA Offers Annual Installment Deferral Option for Farm Storage Facility Loan Borrowers

To assist Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) borrowers experiencing financial hardship from the pandemic and other challenges in production agriculture, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is offering a one-time annual installment payment deferral option. No fees or prepayment penalties apply for borrowers who choose this FSFL loan flexibility option.

Eligible borrowers can request a one-time only annual installment payment deferral for loans having terms of three, five, seven or ten years. The installment deferral option is not available for 12-year term loans.

The FSFL installment payments will remain the same, except for the last year. The original loan interest rate and annual payment due date will remain the same. However, because the installment payment deferral is a one-year loan term extension, the final payment will be higher due to additional accrued interest.

Borrowers interested in exercising the one-time annual installment deferral option should contact FSA to make the request and to obtain, complete and sign required forms.

FSFLs provide low-interest financing for producers to store, handle and transport eligible commodities.

More Information

In addition to offering flexibilities for FSFLs, FSA has also made other flexibilities to help producers impacted by the pandemic, including relaxing the loan-making process for farm operating and ownership loans and implementing the Disaster Set-Aside provision that enables an upcoming installment on a direct loan to be set aside for the year. More information on these flexibilities can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

All USDA Service Centers are open for business, including some that are open to visitors to conduct business in person by appointment only. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other Service Center agency should call ahead and schedule an appointment. Service Centers that are open for appointments will pre-screen visitors based on health concerns or recent travel, and visitors must adhere to social distancing guidelines. Visitors may also be required to wear a face covering during their appointment. Field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. Our program delivery staff will be in the office, and they will be working with our producers in office, by phone and using online tools. More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

For more information, contact your local USDA Service Center. To locate your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-center-locator.

FSA is Accepting CRP Continuous Enrollment Offers

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is accepting offers for specific conservation practices under the [Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\) Continuous Signup](#).

In exchange for a yearly rental payment, farmers enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and to plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. The program's long-term goal is to re-establish valuable land cover to improve water quality, prevent soil erosion, and reduce loss of wildlife habitat. Contracts for land enrolled in CRP are 10-15 years in length.

Under continuous CRP signup, environmentally sensitive land devoted to certain conservation practices can be enrolled in CRP at any time. Offers for continuous enrollment are not subject to competitive bidding during specific periods. Instead they are automatically accepted provided the land and producer meet certain eligibility requirements and the enrollment levels do not exceed the statutory cap.

For more information, including a list of acceptable practices, contact your local USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov/crp.

USDA and SCORE Joining Forces to Find Mentors

If you are a farmer or rancher, or have agricultural or business experience, join us in supporting the next generation and in investing in your local community. Your experiences and knowledge as a business owner, agricultural professional, or farmer can provide vital support to your community.

USDA is collaborating with SCORE – score.org - the nation's largest network of volunteer, expert business mentors in an effort to expand the field of available agricultural mentors and provide free business mentoring to farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural and rural business owners. SCORE is currently looking for volunteers with experience in an agriculture-related field who would like to become part of an extended field of volunteers. The organization's Orientation and Mentoring Certification program provides volunteers with everything needed to be a successful volunteer. Training includes background about SCORE's mission and services, as well as guidance on how to be a business mentor, including enhancement of listening, interviewing and problem-solving skills.

Current mentors have backgrounds in finance, accounting, marketing, operations, business and financial planning. The mentors provide local expertise and free one-on-one business mentoring to new and existing farmers and business owners. Together they work through the process of starting or maintaining agricultural and rural businesses. No matter what stage a business is in, SCORE volunteer mentors can help in developing business plans, navigating financing and legal issues, identifying new markets, and other topics, in order to help their clients succeed. FSA invites you to learn more and sign up to become a mentor today at newfarmers.usda.gov/mentorship.

Current Interest Rates for August

- Farm Operating Loans — Direct 1.375%
- Farm Ownership Loans — Direct 2.375%
- Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher — 1.50%
- Emergency Loans — 2.375%
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (3 years) — 0.250%
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (5 years) — 0.250%
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (7 years) — 0.500%
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (10 years) — 0.625%
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (12 years) — 0.750%
- Sugar Storage Facility Loans (15 year term) — 0.875%
- Commodity Loans — 1.125%

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).