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| April 2020 NL Masthead  Having trouble viewing this email? [View it as a Web page](https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USFSA/bulletins/2ebfc7c).   * [FSA Makes Changes to Farm Loan, Disaster, Conservation and Safety Net Programs to Make it Easier for Customers to Conduct Business](#link_1) * [FSA Adds Farm Loan Flexibilities](#link_2) * [USDA’s Conservation Reserve Program Grasslands Signup](#link_3) * [Submit Loan Requests for Financing Early](#link_4) * [USDA Announces Updates for Honeybee Producers](#link_5) * [Loan Servicing](#link_6) * [CRP Continuous Enrollment Period](#link_7) * [Communication is Key in Lending](#link_8)  Maine FSA Newsletter April 2020 |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Maine Farm Service Agency **Maine State Farm Service Agency**  967 Illinois Ave, Suite 2  Bangor, ME  04401  207-990-9140  [www.fsa.usda.gov/me](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2Fme%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=04%7C01%7C%7Cb06bff60474744f3f19908d95b61ef8b%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637641300667890697%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=SBr2Ihrji8YnybjwdwDUzcTZY9shu%2B5ZyATVa%2FgEOQM%3D&reserved=0)  **State Executive Director:**  David R. Lavway, SED  **State Committee:**  Sue McCrum  Heath Miller  Nancy Ricker  Dave Tuttle  Fred Flewelling  To find contact information for your local office go to [www.fsa.usda.gov/me](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2Fme%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=04%7C01%7C%7Cb06bff60474744f3f19908d95b61ef8b%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637641300667900654%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=EqfJ%2Bj9lp7FMaVxs%2BXh9Ant0MH6gJCmrT%2BW4eERDMBk%3D&reserved=0) | FSA Makes Changes to Farm Loan, Disaster, Conservation and Safety Net Programs to Make it Easier for Customers to Conduct Business USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) county offices are open in Maine by phone appointment only until further notice, and FSA staff are available to continue helping agricultural producers with program signups, loan servicing and other important actions. Additionally, FSA is relaxing the loan-making process and adding flexibilities for servicing direct and guaranteed loans to provide credit to producers in need.  FSA Service Centers are open for business by phone appointment only. While our program delivery staff will continue to come into to the office, they will be working with our agricultural producers by phone and using email and online tools whenever possible.  FSA is delivering programs and services, including:   * Farm loans; * Commodity loans; * Farm Storage Facility Loan program; * Disaster assistance programs, including signup for the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus (this includes producers now eligible because of losses due to drought and excess moisture in 2018 and 2019); * Safety net programs, including 2020 signup for the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage programs; * Conservation programs; and * Acreage reports.   FSA is relaxing the loan making process and adding flexibilities for servicing direct and guaranteed loans to provide credit to producers in need. For a full list of flexibilities, visit [farmers.gov/coronavirus](http://www.farmers.gov/coronavirus?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery).  **Contacting FSA** FSA will be accepting additional forms and applications by facsimile or electronic signature. Some services are also available online to customers with an eAuth account, which provides access to the [farmers.gov](http://www.farmers.gov/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery) portal where producers can view USDA farm loan information and payments and view and track certain USDA program applications and payments. Customers can track payments, report completed practices, request conservation assistance and electronically sign documents. Customers who do not already have an eAuth account can enroll at [farmers.gov/sign-in](https://www.farmers.gov/sign-in?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery).  FSA encourages producers to contact their county office to discuss these programs and any current, and future, temporary changes to farm loan deadlines and the loan servicing options available. For Service Center contact information, visit [farmers.gov/coronavirus](https://www.farmers.gov/coronavirus?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery). FSA Adds Farm Loan Flexibilities Farm loans are critical for annual operating and family living expenses, emergency needs and cash flow, especially in tough times.  The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is providing additional flexibilities to provide producers with credit options.  We encourage direct loan applicants and borrowers to contact their county office to discuss these programs and any current, and future, temporary changes to farm loan deadlines and the loan servicing options available. Customers participating in FSA’s guaranteed loan programs are encouraged to contact their lender. For a full list of flexibilities, visit [farmers.gov/coronavirus](http://www.farmers.gov/coronavirus?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery). | |
| USDA’s Conservation Reserve Program Grasslands Signup Farmers and ranchers may apply to enroll grasslands in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Grasslands signup. The signup runs through May 15.  Through CRP Grasslands, participants retain the right to conduct common grazing practices, such as haying, mowing or harvesting seed from the enrolled land. Timing of some activities may be restricted by the primary nesting season of birds.  Participants will receive an annual rental payment and may receive up to 50 percent cost-share for establishing approved conservation practices. The duration of the CRP contract is either 10 or 15 years. FSA will rank applications using a number of factors including existence of expiring CRP land, threat of conversion or development, existing grassland, and predominance of native species cover, and cost.  The 2018 Farm Bill set aside 2 million acres for CRP Grassland enrollment. CRP is one of the largest conservation programs at USDA. CRP marks its 35-year anniversary in 2020 with 22 million acres currently enrolled.  For more information or to enroll in CRP Grasslands, contact your local FSA county office or visit [fsa.usda.gov/crp](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2Fprograms-and-services%2Fconservation-programs%2Fconservation-reserve-program%2Findex%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=04%7C01%7C%7Cb06bff60474744f3f19908d95b61ef8b%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637641300667900654%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=jO71UxddsbLsb9WZ4AzJl69VC3PChdwvIana8xuXpd4%3D&reserved=0). To locate your local FSA office, visit [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery).   Submit Loan Requests for Financing Early The Farm Loan teams in Maine are  already working on operating loans for spring 2020 so it is important that potential borrowers submit their requests early so they can be timely processed. The farm loan team can help determine which loan programs are best for applicants.  FSA offers a wide range of low-interest loans that can meet the financial needs of any farm operation for just about any purpose.  The traditional **farm operating** **and farm ownership loans** can help large and small farm operations take advantage of early purchasing discounts for spring inputs as well expenses throughout the year.  **Microloans** are a simplified loan program that will provide up to $50,000 for both Farm Ownership and Operating Microloans to eligible applicants. These loans, targeted for smaller operations and non-traditional operations, can be used for operating expenses, starting a new agricultural enterprise, purchasing equipment, and other needs associated with a farming operation. The staff at the Name County FSA office can provide more details on farm operating and microloans and provide loan applications. Loans to beginning farmers and members of underserved groups are a priority.  Other types of loans available include:  **Marketing Assistance Loans** allow producers to use eligible commodities as loan collateral and obtain a 9-month loan while the crop is in storage. These loans provide cash flow to the producer and allow them to market the crop when prices may be more advantageous.  **Farm Storage Facility Loans** can be used to build permanent structures used to store eligible commodities, or for storage and handling trucks, or portable or permanent handling equipment. A variety of structures are eligible under this loan, including bunker silos, grain bins, hay storage structures and refrigerated structures for vegetables and fruit. A producer may borrow up to $500,000 per loan**.**  Please call your local County office if you have questions about any of the loans available through FSA.​  To locate your local FSA office, visit [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery).   USDA Announces Updates for Honeybee Producers The United States Department of Agriculture’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced updates to the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP). These updates include changes required by the 2018 Farm Bill as well as discretionary changes intended to improve the administration of the program and clarify existing program requirements. ELAP was previously administered based on FSA’s fiscal year but will now run according to the calendar year. Producers are still required to submit an application for payment within 30 calendar days of the end of the program year. This is not a policy change but will affect the deadline. The signup deadline for calendar year 2020 losses is January 30, 2021.  Starting in 2020, producers will have 15 days from when the loss is first apparent, instead of 30 days, to file a honeybee notice of loss. This change provides consistency between ELAP and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, which also has a 15-day notice of loss period for honey. For other covered losses, including livestock feed, grazing and farm-raised fish losses, the notice of loss deadline for ELAP will remain 30 days from when the loss is first apparent to the producer.  Program participants who were paid for the loss of a honeybee colony or hive in either or both of the previous two years will be required to provide additional documentation to substantiate how current year inventory was acquired.  If the honeybee colony loss incurred was because of Colony Collapse Disorder, program participants must provide a producer certification that the loss was a direct result of at least three of the five symptoms of Colony Collapse Disorder, which include:   * the loss of live queen and/or drone bee populations inside the hives; * rapid decline of adult worker bee population outside the hives, leaving brood poorly or completely unattended; * absence of dead adult bees inside the hive and outside the entrance of the hive; * absence of robbing collapsed colonies; and * at the time of collapse, varroa mite and Nosema populations are not at levels known to cause economic injury or population decline.   For honeybees, ELAP covers colony losses, honeybee hive losses (the physical structure) and honeybee feed losses in instances where the colony, hive or feed has been destroyed by a natural disaster or, in the case of colony losses, because of Colony Collapse Disorder. Colony losses must be in excess of normal mortality.  ELAP also provides emergency assistance to eligible producers of livestock and farm-raised fish including for feed and grazing losses. It covers losses because of eligible adverse weather or loss conditions, including blizzards and wildfires on federally managed lands. ELAP also covers losses resulting from the cost of transporting water to livestock due to an eligible drought.  For more information on ELAP visit [farmers.gov/recover](https://www.farmers.gov/recover?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery) or contact your FSA County Office. To locate your local FSA office, visit [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery).   Loan Servicing There are options for Farm Service Agency loan customers during financial stress. If you are a borrower who is unable to make payments on a loan, contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager to learn about the options available to you. CRP Continuous Enrollment Period The Farm Service Agency is accepting offers for specific conservation practices under the [Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Continuous Signup](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2FAssets%2FUSDA-FSA-Public%2Fusdafiles%2FFactSheets%2F2019%2Fcrp_continuous_enrollment_period-fact_sheet.pdf%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=04%7C01%7C%7Cb06bff60474744f3f19908d95b61ef8b%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637641300667910610%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=5n4XA%2FsmH%2BXxw8ExwUQteI%2FS8u308dXQd7d0pjrPGgA%3D&reserved=0).  CRP is a voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive agricultural land is devoted to conservation benefits. CRP participants establish long-term, resource-conserving vegetative species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as “covers”), to control soil erosion, improve the water quality and enhance wildlife habitat. In return, FSA provides participants with annual rental payments and cost-share assistance. Continuous signup enrollment contracts are 10 to 15 years in duration.  Under continuous CRP signup, environmentally sensitive land devoted to certain conservation practices can be enrolled in CRP at any time. Offers are automatically accepted provided the land and producer meet certain eligibility requirements and the enrollment levels do not exceed the statutory cap.  Unlike CRP enrollments under general CRP signups or CRP Grasslands, offers for continuous enrollment are not subject to competitive bidding during specific periods.  For more information, including a list of acceptable practices, visit [fsa.usda.gov/crp](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2Fprograms-and-services%2Fconservation-programs%2Fconservation-reserve-program%2Findex%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=04%7C01%7C%7Cb06bff60474744f3f19908d95b61ef8b%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637641300667910610%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=j08JQlFCJMqN5lOfNp8XBUBRqdwDF4o2cojNjrBnAGU%3D&reserved=0). Communication is Key in Lending Farm Service Agency (FSA) is committed to providing our farm loan borrowers the tools necessary to be a success. A part of ensuring this success is providing guidance and counsel from the loan application process through the borrower’s graduation to commercial lending institutions. While it is FSA’s commitment to advise borrowers as they identify goals and evaluate progress, it is crucial for borrowers to communicate with their farm loan staff when changes occur. It is the borrower’s responsibility to alert FSA to any of the following:   * Any proposed or significant changes in the farming operation; * Any significant changes to family income or expenses; * The development of problem situations; * Any losses or proposed significant changes in security;   In addition, if a farm loan borrower cannot make payments to suppliers, other creditors, or FSA on time, contact farm loan staff immediately to discuss loan servicing options.  For more information on FSA farm loan programs, visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2F%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=04%7C01%7C%7Cb06bff60474744f3f19908d95b61ef8b%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637641300667920567%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=p1S%2FDP%2BFfnP6T0zcL1A%2ByL3hed%2BgMHg4qUqT%2FJ9gtJM%3D&reserved=0) .    Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in any meeting/event/function should contact Mary Anne Coffin at 207-990-9140 or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339.  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). |