|  |
| --- |
| February 2020 NL Masthead  Having trouble viewing this email? [View it as a Web page](https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USFSA/bulletins/2ebfc6f).   * [Higher Limits Now Available on USDA Farm Loans](#link_1) * [USDA Microloans Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property](#link_2) * [USDA Reminds Producers of Feb. 28 Deadline for Conservation Reserve Program General Signup](#link_4) * [Youth Loans](#link_3) * [FSA Encourages Producers to Enroll Soon in Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs](#link_5) * [MAL and LDP Policy](#link_6)  Maine FSA Newsletter |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Maine 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%7Cf5e4db54b2594a0c36b808d95b61bde3%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637641297903318493%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=GxwGfARTafTH9fDv%2FOsdd0%2B6BxBZ1jahhJA8WSVygok%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%7Cf5e4db54b2594a0c36b808d95b61bde3%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637641297903328460%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=n3DaiEFW1KD5pRaZzRsDR6mI2ebw8UcIYVIx%2FtBrvt8%3D&reserved=0) | Higher Limits Now Available on USDA Farm Loans Higher limits are now available for borrowers interested in USDA’s farm loans, which help agricultural producers purchase farms or cover operating expenses. The 2018 Farm Bill increased the amount that producers can borrow through direct and guaranteed loans available through USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) and made changes to other loans, such as microloans and emergency loans.  Key changes include:   * The Direct Operating Loan limit increased from $300,000 to $400,000, and the Guaranteed Operating Loan limit increased from $ 1.429 million to $1.75 million. Operating loans help producers pay for normal operating expenses, including machinery and equipment, seed, livestock feed, and more. * The Direct Farm Ownership Loan limit increased from $300,000 to $600,000, and the Guaranteed Farm Ownership Loan limit increased from $1.429 million to $1.75 million. Farm ownership loans help producers become owner-operators of family farms as well as improve and expand current operations. * Producers can now receive both a $50,000 Farm Ownership Microloan and a $50,000 Operating Microloan. Previously, microloans were limited to a combined $50,000. Microloans provide flexible access to credit for small, beginning, niche, and non-traditional farm operations. * Producers who previously received debt forgiveness as part of an approved FSA restructuring plan are now eligible to apply for emergency loans. Previously, these producers were ineligible. * Beginning and socially disadvantaged producers can now receive up to a 95 percent guarantee against the loss of principal and interest on a loan, up from 90 percent.   **About Farm Loans**  Direct farm loans, which include microloans and emergency loans, are financed and serviced by FSA, while guaranteed farm loans are financed and serviced by commercial lenders. For guaranteed loans, FSA provides a guarantee against possible financial loss of principal and interest.  For more information on FSA farm loans, visit [www.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%7Cf5e4db54b2594a0c36b808d95b61bde3%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637641297903328460%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=3TUyJRvHesXcikkjTo6m32UO7GJQod3pe%2FU9s7rbfXA%3D&reserved=0) or contact your [local USDA service center](https://www.farmers.gov/service-locator?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery). USDA Microloans Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property **Producers, Including Beginning and Underserved Farmers, Have a New Option to Gain Access to Land**  The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is offering farm ownership microloans, creating a new financing avenue for farmers to buy and improve property. These microloans are especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming, and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations.  The microloan program has been hugely successful, providing more than 16,800 low-interest loans, totaling over $373 million to producers across the country. Microloans have helped farmers and ranchers with operating costs, such as feed, fertilizer, tools, fencing, equipment, and living expenses since 2013. Seventy percent of loans have gone to new farmers.  Now, microloans will be available to also help with farm land and building purchases, and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate loans to help farmers strengthen their operations. Microloans provide up to $50,000 to qualified producers and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).  To learn more about the FSA microloan program visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2Fmicroloans%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=04%7C01%7C%7Cf5e4db54b2594a0c36b808d95b61bde3%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637641297903338408%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=QW6c1UC7ohoSyQnfPn%2FqAQBRrBRqmGCYHreP6q7GjLY%3D&reserved=0), or contact your local FSA office. | |
| USDA Reminds Producers of Feb. 28 Deadline for Conservation Reserve Program General Signup The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reminds agricultural producers interested in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) 2020 general signup to enroll by February 28, 2020. This signup is available to farmers and private landowners who are either enrolling for the first time or re-enrolling for another 10- to 15-year term.  Farmers and ranchers who enroll in CRP receive yearly rental payments for voluntarily establishing long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as “covers”), which can control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat on marginally productive agricultural lands.  CRP has 22 million acres enrolled, but the 2018 Farm Bill lifted the cap to 27 million acres.  Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest private-lands conservation programs in the U.S. It was originally intended to primarily control soil erosion and potentially stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production. The program has evolved over the years, providing many conservation and economic benefits. Marking its 35th anniversary in 2020, CRP has had many successes, including:   * Preventing more than 9 billion tons of soil from eroding, enough soil to fill 600 million dump trucks; * Reducing nitrogen and phosphorous runoff relative to annually tilled cropland by 95 and 85 percent respectively; * Sequestering an annual average of 49 million tons of greenhouse gases, equal to taking 9 million cars off the road; * Creating more than 3 million acres of restored wetlands while protecting more than 175,000 stream miles with riparian forest and grass buffers, enough to go around the world 7 times; and * Benefiting bees and other pollinators and increased populations of ducks, pheasants, turkey, bobwhite quail, prairie chickens, grasshopper sparrows and many other birds.   The CRP continuous signup is ongoing, which enables producers to enroll for [certain practices](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%7Cf5e4db54b2594a0c36b808d95b61bde3%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637641297903338408%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=f8AtY0oeQF9nRutgzRITboOwgfJ0r%2BtJgu4IFX5jhIc%3D&reserved=0). FSA plans to open the Soil Health and Income Protection Program, a CRP pilot program, in early 2020, and the 2020 CRP Grasslands signup runs from March 16, 2020 to May 15, 2020.  To enroll in CRP, 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%7Cf5e4db54b2594a0c36b808d95b61bde3%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637641297903348372%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=%2F5%2BZzJbZVXimOz4wSMID2%2BTKjA%2FEPiDw8twYKBGfp5M%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). Youth Loans The Farm Service Agency makes loans to youth to establish and operate agricultural income-producing projects in connection with 4-H clubs, FFA and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is $5,000.  **Youth Loan Eligibility Requirements:**   * Be a citizen of the United States (which includes Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) or a legal resident alien * Be 10 years to 20 years of age * Comply with FSA’s general eligibility requirements * Be unable to get a loan from other sources * Conduct a modest income-producing project in a supervised program of work as outlined above * Demonstrate capability of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. The project supervisor must recommend the youth loan applicant, along with providing adequate supervision.   Stop by the county office for help preparing and processing the application forms. FSA Encourages Producers to Enroll Soon in Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) encourages agricultural producers to enroll now in the Agriculture Risk Loss (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs. March 15, 2020 is the enrollment deadline for the 2019 crop year.  Although more than 200,000 producers have enrolled to date, FSA anticipates 1.5 million producers will enroll for ARC and PLC. By enrolling soon, producers can beat the rush as the deadline nears.  FSA offices have multiple programs competing for the time and attention of our staff.  Because of the importance and complexities of the ARC and PLC programs; and to ensure FSA meets your program delivery expectations, please do not wait to start the enrollment process. Call your FSA county office and make an appointment soon to ensure your elections are made and contracts signed well ahead of the deadlines.  ARC and PLC provide financial protections to farmers from substantial drops in crop prices or revenues and are vital economic safety nets for most American farms.  The programs cover the following commodities: barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium and short grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.  Until March 15, producers who have not yet enrolled in ARC or PLC for 2019 can enroll for both 2019 and 2020 during the same visit to an FSA county office unless yield updates are requested. Additionally, farm owners have a one-time opportunity to update PLC payment yields that take effect beginning with crop year 2020. If the owner accompanies the producer to the office, the yield update and enrollments may be completed during the same office visit.  **More Information**  For more information on ARC and PLC, download our [program fact sheet](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2FAssets%2FUSDA-FSA-Public%2Fusdafiles%2FFactSheets%2F2019%2Farc-plc_overview_fact_sheet-aug_2019.pdf%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=04%7C01%7C%7Cf5e4db54b2594a0c36b808d95b61bde3%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637641297903348372%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=Enhy68B6vdOSFc2AfoDvPpp5x5S6Sa6SQAJCkLu027M%3D&reserved=0) or our [2014-2018 farm bills comparison fact sheet](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2FAssets%2FUSDA-FSA-Public%2Fusdafiles%2FFactSheets%2F2019%2Farc-plc_farm_bill_comparisons-fact_sheet-aug-2019.pdf%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=04%7C01%7C%7Cf5e4db54b2594a0c36b808d95b61bde3%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637641297903358323%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=nsObVfO3M6htQHbLpp8Q6b6phw3iEXLUOZY0K9OIa1s%3D&reserved=0). Online ARC and PLC election decision tools are available at [fsa.usda.gov/arc/plc](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2Fprograms-and-services%2Farcplc_program%2Findex%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=04%7C01%7C%7Cf5e4db54b2594a0c36b808d95b61bde3%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637641297903358323%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=yP6uXISUKIciNLEf6agIEsBaZi5AYh7sUbkQmCjvSDI%3D&reserved=0). To enroll, contact your [FSA county office](https://www.farmers.gov/service-locator?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery) for an appointment. MAL and LDP Policy The 2018 Farm Bill extends loan authority through 2023 for Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs).  MALs and LDPs provide financing and marketing assistance for wheat, feed grains, soybeans, and other oilseeds, pulse crops, rice, peanuts, cotton, wool and honey. MALs provide producers interim financing after harvest to help them meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows. A producer who is eligible to obtain a loan, but agrees to forgo the loan, may obtain an LDP if such a payment is available. Marketing loan provisions and LDPs are not available for sugar and extra-long staple cotton.  FSA is now accepting requests for 2019 MALs and LDPs for all eligible commodities after harvest. Requests for loans and LDPs shall be made on or before the final availability date for the respective commodities.  Commodity certificates are available to loan holders who have outstanding nonrecourse loans for wheat, upland cotton, rice, feed grains, pulse crops (dry peas, lentils, large and small chickpeas), peanuts, wool, soybeans and designated minor oilseeds. These certificates can be purchased at the posted county price (or adjusted world price or national posted price) for the quantity of commodity under loan, and must be immediately exchanged for the collateral, satisfying the loan. MALs redeemed with commodity certificates are not subject to Adjusted Gross Income provisions.  To be considered eligible for an LDP, producers must have form [CCC-633EZ](http://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov/efcommon/eFileServices/eFormsAdmin/CCC0633EZ_140328V03.pdf?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery), Page 1 on file at their local FSA Office before losing beneficial interest in the crop. Pages 2, 3 or 4 of the form must be submitted when payment is requested.  Marketing loan gains (MLGs) and loan deficiency payments (LDPs) are no longer subject to payment limitations, actively engaged in farming and cash-rent tenant rules.  Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) provisions state that a producer whose total applicable three-year average AGI exceeds $900,000 is not eligible to receive an MLG or LDP. Producers must have a valid CCC-941 on file to earn a market gain of LDP. The AGI does not apply to MALs redeemed with commodity certificate exchange.  For more information and additional eligibility requirements, please visit a nearby USDA Service Center or FSA’s website [fsa.usda.gov](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2F%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=04%7C01%7C%7Cf5e4db54b2594a0c36b808d95b61bde3%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637641297903368275%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=RUOC3huYFnlFFQuA%2F5CssdM2uEszgWG6tBPNs9%2F39C8%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). |