

March 9, 2016



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## Montana FSA: March 2016 eNewsletter

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### USDA Farm Service Agency - Montana

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### Fast-Approaching Deadline for 2016 NAP Coverage: Tuesday, March 15th

FSA reminds Montana farmers and ranchers that **March 15** is the sales closing deadline for 2016 spring crops covered by the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP).

NAP provides financial assistance to eligible producers when natural disasters cause catastrophic loss of production (low yield) or prevented planting of an eligible noninsurable crop by providing coverage equivalent to the catastrophic risk protection level of crop insurance. In

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**Reasonable  
Accommodations:**

People with disabilities who require accommodations to participate in FSA programs should contact the County Executive Director in the FSA Office in your area or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339. Alternatively, you may also contact Montana FSA Civil Rights Coordinator Jennifer Cole at (406) 587-6786 or [jennifer.cole@mt.usda.gov](mailto:jennifer.cole@mt.usda.gov).

the event of a natural disaster, NAP provides catastrophic level (CAT) coverage based on the amount of loss that exceeds 50 percent of expected production at 55 percent of the average market price for the crop. The 2014 Farm Bill authorized additional coverage levels ranging from 50 to 65 percent of production, in 5 percent increments, at 100 percent of the average market price. This additional "buy-up" coverage must be elected by a producer by the application closing date. Producers who elect additional coverage must pay a premium in addition to the service fee. Crops intended for grazing are not eligible for additional coverage.

Eligible producers can apply for coverage at their local FSA office using form CCC-471, Application for Coverage. Producers must file the application and pay the applicable service fee on or before the application closing date for the applicable crop. The service fee is the lesser of \$250 per crop or \$750 per producer per administrative county, not to exceed a total of \$1,875 for a producer with farming interests in multiple counties.

Beginning farmers or ranchers, limited resource producers, and underserved farmers, including minorities and women, are eligible for a waiver of the service fee and a 50 percent premium reduction when they file form CCC-860, "Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource and Beginning Farmer or Rancher Certification." If you have questions regarding beginning, limited resource, and underserved producer definitions and eligibility, please contact your local FSA office.

NAP is available on commercially-produced agricultural commodity crops for which the catastrophic risk protection level of crop insurance is not available. If the Risk Management Agency (RMA) offers coverage for a specific crop and intended use in the county, then NAP coverage is not available for that crop.

USDA has partnered with Michigan State University and the University of Illinois to create an online tool at [www.fsa.usda.gov/nap](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/nap) that allows producers to determine whether their crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP and to explore the best level of protection for their operation.

A copy of a Montana NAP factsheet is available at: [http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA\\_File/16\\_mtnap.pdf](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/16_mtnap.pdf). For more information on NAP and other FSA programs, contact your local FSA office and visit Montana FSA online at [www.fsa.usda.gov/mt](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mt). Additional resources are available at the Montana State University (MSU) Extension Farm Bill Website at: <http://www.msueextension.org/farmpolicy/nap.html>.

## Registration Open for USDA Tribal Outreach Forum on March 23-25 in Bozeman

***Deadline to reserve hotel rooms at the discounted lodging rate at the Bozeman Holiday Inn was extended to this Thurs., March 10th.***

Spots are still available to attend the 2016 USDA Tribal Outreach Forum in Bozeman on March 23 to 25, the USDA Montana Food & Agriculture Council (SFAC) announced.

The three-day outreach forum is hosted by USDA in partnership with the Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) and Indian Nations Conservation Alliance (INCA). USDA administers federal agricultural programs, including farm loan, risk management, conservation, price support, housing, business and community programs that benefit farmers, ranchers, individuals and communities.

USDA representatives from Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Rural Development (RD), National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), Risk Management Agency (RMA) and Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) will provide program and agency updates. Speakers include the USDA Ombudsperson Joanne Dea and representatives from Intertribal Agriculture Council, Montana State University Extension, Governor's Office of Indian Affairs and the Montana Department of Agriculture. INCA will facilitate an open panel discussion with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Tribal and USDA representatives focusing on serving tribal operators and tribal communities.

The forum concludes with a Friday afternoon workshop addressing Food Security on Montana's Indian Reservations hosted by USDA, Montana Food Bank Network and the State of Montana's No Kid Hungry Initiative.

The forum's keynote speaker is Verna Billedeaux, Montana State University Blackfeet Extension Agent. Billedeaux's Wednesday luncheon address will focus on Developing Youth and Volunteers in Indian Country – Blackfeet 4-H Program & IAC Youth Leadership Efforts.

Registration is free and open. Attendees can signup for the general session and/or the Friday afternoon food security workshop. Registration form is available at [http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA\\_File/16\\_usdatribalforumreg.pdf](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/16_usdatribalforumreg.pdf).

To register, send a completed registration form to FSA via email at [jennifer.cole@mt.usda.gov](mailto:jennifer.cole@mt.usda.gov), Fax to (855) 546-0264 attention Jennifer Cole or mail to: Jennifer Cole, USDA-FSA State Office, P.O. Box 670, Bozeman, MT 59771.

The forum will be held at the Bozeman Holiday Inn (5 East Baxter Ln.) in Bozeman. Lodging reservations can be made at the Bozeman Holiday Inn by calling 406.587.4561. The room block is available until **March 10, 2016** by requesting the "Tribal Outreach" group rate of \$89 plus fees/taxes.

For questions or more information, contact Jennifer at (406) 587-6786 or [jennifer.cole@mt.usda.gov](mailto:jennifer.cole@mt.usda.gov).

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to participate in this meeting should contact Jennifer Cole at (406) 587-6786 or [jennifer.cole@mt.usda.gov](mailto:jennifer.cole@mt.usda.gov) or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339 by March 18, 2016.

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## Registration Open for the 5th Annual Women in Agriculture Conference in Bozeman

Get registered for inspiration, knowledge and networking on **Sat., March 19, 2016** for the **5th Annual Women in Agriculture Conference**.

"**Power Up Your Farm**" is the theme for the fifth annual Women in Agriculture Conference and will be an engaging, interactive day full of inspiration, learning and networking with other women farmers. This conference is a one-day event held simultaneously in 31 locations throughout Washington, Alaska, Idaho, Montana and Oregon.

**MONTANA LOCATION:** On Sat., March 19, 2016, Dr. Kate Fuller host the Montana location in Bozeman for the Women in Agriculture remote conference at MSU in 231 Linfield Hall, the new CHS classroom. The late registration fee after **March 6** is \$30.00. Seating is limited to 40 people. Scholarships are available for beginning farmers, college agriculture students and 4-H and FFA members. To apply go to <http://womeninag.wsu.edu>.

There are a block of rooms reserved at the Best Western Plus Grantree Inn under block **Women in Ag**. The phone number is 406-587-5261. The Grantree will also have a shuttle service to bring participants up to MSU.

For registration and other information, please visit: <http://womeninag.wsu.edu>.

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## 2016 Emergency Livestock Disaster Program

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 the Livestock Indemnity Program (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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## 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 any time between 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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## March 2016 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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## USDA Removes Farm Program Payments to Managers Not Actively Engaged in Farming

USDA finalized a rule to ensure that farm safety-net payments are issued only to active managers of farms that operate as joint ventures or general partnerships, consistent with the direction and authority provided by Congress in the 2014 Farm Bill. The action, which exempts family farm operations, closes a loophole where individuals who were not actively part of farm management still received payments.

Since 1987, the broad definition of "actively engaged" resulted in some general partnerships and joint ventures adding managers to the farming operation, qualifying for more payments, that did not substantially contribute to management. The rule applies to operations seeking more than one farm manager, and requires measurable, documented hours and key management activities each year. Some operations of certain sizes and complexity may be allowed up to three qualifying managers under limited conditions. The changes apply to payments for 2016 and subsequent crop years for Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) Programs, Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP) and Marketing Loan Gains (MLG) realized via the Marketing Assistance Loan program.

As required by Congress, the new rule does not apply to family farms, or change regulations related to contributions of land, capital, equipment, or labor. The changes go into effect for the 2016 crop year for most farms. Farms that have already planted fall crops for 2016 have until the 2017 crop year to comply. For more details, producers are encouraged to consult their local Farm Service Agency office.

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## **ARC-PLC: Enrollment Period for 2016 USDA Safety Net Coverage Ends Aug. 1**

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 visit FSA county offices through **Aug. 1, 2016**, to sign contracts to enroll in coverage for 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](http://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>.

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## **Continuous 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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## **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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## FSA Working with Risk Management Agency to promote compliance with Federal Crop Insurance Program

The Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000 requires the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Risk Management Agency (RMA) to work together to improve program compliance and integrity of the Federal Crop Insurance Program (FCIC). As a result of the passage of the 2000 Act, RMA and FSA are required to coordinate a plan to identify, address and reconcile discrepancies of all relevant producer-derived information, and to coordinate a monitoring program to include fact finding relative to allegations of program fraud, waste, and abuse. FSA will assist RMA and insurance providers in monitoring conditions throughout the growing season and conduct growing season inspections. All suspected cases of fraud, waste, and abuse concerning the Federal Crop Insurance Program will be referred to RMA. FSA will also assist RMA with auditing claims. Producers may also report suspected cases of fraud, waste, and abuse to their local FSA County Office, the RMA Office or OIG.

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### Upcoming FSA Program Deadlines

- **March 15:** 2016 NAP Application Closing Date for Spring Crops
- **March 16:** 2016 CRP Spring Managed and Routine Grazing Period Begins (with prior County Committee Approval of Request)
- **March 31:** Final Availability Date for Loans and LDPs for Barley, Canola, Crambe, Flaxseed, Honey, Oats, Rapeseed, Wheat and Sesame Seed
- **May 14:** 2016 CRP Spring Managed and Routine Grazing Period Ends
- **May 15 to July 15:** Primary Nesting Season
- **May 31:** Final Availability Date for Loans and LDPs for Corn, Dry Peas, Grain Sorghum, Lentils, Mustard Seed, Rice, Safflower Seed, Chickpeas, Soybeans and Sunflower Seed
- **July 15:** 2016 Acreage Reporting Deadline for Spring Seeded Alfalfa Seed, Forage Seeding, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Fruit (except cherries), Vegetables, Christmas Trees, and all Spring-Seeded Crops and any other crops not required to be reported by previously announced deadlines.
- **July 16:** CRP 2016 Summer/Fall Managed Harvesting and Routine Grazing Begins (with prior County Committee Approval of Request)
- **Aug. 1:** Deadline for 2016 ARC and PLC Enrollment

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### USDA News from NRCS: USDA to Invest \$150 Million through Conservation Stewardship Program to Help Improve Working Lands

USDA announced that \$150 million in funding is available for agricultural producers through the [Conservation Stewardship Program](#) (CSP), USDA's largest conservation program that helps producers voluntarily improve the health and productivity of private and Tribal working lands. USDA's [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) (NRCS) plans to add an estimated 10 million acres to the rolls of CSP during fiscal 2016.

"The Conservation Stewardship Program is one of our most popular programs with producers because it results in real change on the ground by boosting soil and air quality, conserving clean water and enhancing wildlife habitat," Vilsack said. "With this investment, we'll be able to build on the already record number of acres enrolled in USDA's conservation programs, enabling producers

to achieve higher levels of conservation and adopt new and emerging conservation technologies on farms, ranches and forests.”

NRCS accepts applications for CSP throughout the year, but producers should submit applications by **March 31** to [USDA service centers](#) to ensure they are considered for enrollment in 2016.

Participants with existing CSP contracts that will expire on Dec.31, 2016 have the option to renew their contracts for an additional five years if they agree to adopt additional activities to achieve higher levels of conservation on their lands. Applications to renew are also due by **March 31**.

NRCS also makes CSP available to producers as an additional opportunity to participate in regional landscape-level conservation efforts including the [Sage Grouse Initiative](#), [Lesser Prairie-Chicken Initiative](#), [Longleaf Pine Initiative](#) and [Ogallala Aquifer Initiative](#).

Funding is available for more than 100 kinds of enhancements nationwide to help participants:

- Improve soil quality through use of cover crops, conservation crop rotations and other activities that increase soil productivity.
- Use water wisely and improve water quality through enhancements such as more efficient irrigation systems and weather monitoring.
- Restore habitat for wildlife and pollinators such as the greater sage-grouse, lesser prairie-chicken and monarch butterfly through the use of better grazing systems and improved plant management.

A [CSP self-screening checklist](#) is available to help producers determine if the program is compatible with their operation. As part of the application process, applicants will work with NRCS field personnel to complete a resource inventory of their land to determine the conservation performance for existing and new conservation activities. The applicant's conservation performance will be used to determine eligibility, ranking and payments.

For more information, contact your local NRCS office.

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