

June 2016



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Montana FSA: June 2016 eNewsletter

USDA Farm Service Agency - Montana

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FSA County Committee Nomination Period Begins June 15 in Counties across Montana

The nomination period for the FSA county committees across Montana begins on June 15, 2016. Nomination forms must be postmarked or received in FSA Offices by close of business on Aug. 1, 2016.

State Executive Director: County Committees are unique to FSA and allow producers to have a voice on federal farm program implementation at the local level.
Bruce Nelson

State Committee:

Steve Carney, Chair
Floyd Dahlman
Kelly Flaherty-Settle
Anita Matt
Patricia Quisno

To be eligible to serve on the FSA county committee, a person must participate or cooperate in an agency administered program, be eligible to vote in a county committee election, reside in the county and have an agricultural operation in the local administrative area (LAA) in which the person is a candidate. All producers, including women, minority and beginning farmers and ranchers are encouraged to participate in the nomination and election process.

USDA Office Directories:

[Online Directory of FSA Offices](#)

[PDF of Montana FSA Directory](#)

[PDF of Montana USDA Directory](#)

MONTANA: A map and description of this year's areas open for nomination are available on the Montana FSA web site at www.fsa.usda.gov/mt and on the following link: http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/2016mtfsaelections.pdf.

Producers may nominate themselves or others as candidates. Organizations representing minority and women farmers and ranchers may also nominate candidates. To become a nominee, eligible individuals must sign form FSA-669A. The form and more information about county committee elections is available online at: www.fsa.usda.gov/elections.

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.

Elected county committee members serve a three-year term and are responsible for making decisions on FSA disaster, conservation, commodity and price support programs, as well as other important federal farm program issues. County committees consist of three to 11 members.

FSA will mail election ballots to eligible voters beginning Nov. 7. Ballots are due back in the County Office by mail or in person no later than Dec. 5, 2016. All newly elected county committee members and alternates will take office Jan. 1, 2017.

For more information about county committees, please contact your local FSA office and visit www.fsa.usda.gov/elections and www.fsa.usda.gov/mt.

Did you report your 2016 Crops? Spring Crop Certification Deadline is July 15 & Other Important FSA Dates

June 15: FY'2016 Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) Applications Can Be Accepted from Foresters and Farmers Seeking Incentives to Remove Biomass Residues from Fields or National Forests for Delivery to Energy Generation Facilities

June 15: The nomination period begins for County Committee Elections across Montana.

July 1: Deadline to Record Farm Structure Changes for Program Year 2016

July 1: 2017 MPP-Dairy Election Period Begins

July 15: 2016 Acreage Reporting/Crop Certification 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 15: Final 2015 Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) Final Production Reports are due for certain NAP crops

July 15: 2015 ARC-IC – Farm Benchmark and Actual Yield Certification

July 16: CRP 2016 Summer/Fall Managed Harvesting and Routine Grazing Begins (with prior County Committee Approval of Request)

Aug. 1: Deadline for 2016 Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Enrollment

Aug. 1: Deadline to request farm transfers and reconstitutions for FY' 2016

Aug. 1: Last day to file FSA county committee election nomination forms at the local USDA Service center

Aug. 1: Reconstitution Request Deadline for 2016 ARCPLC farms

Aug. 4: FY'2016 BCAP Deadline from Foresters and Farmers Seeking Incentives to Remove Biomass Residues from Fields or National Forests for Delivery to Energy Generation Facilities

Sept. 30: 2017 NAP Application Closing Date for Annual Fall-Seeded Crops, Perennial Forage and Grazing, Mixed Forage Crops, Rye, Speltz, Triticale, Wheat and Garlic

Importance of Timely Crop Certification/Acreage Reporting

In order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements, all producers, including livestock producers, are encouraged to visit their local FSA office to file an accurate crop certification report by the applicable deadline.

The 2016 Acreage Reporting/Crop Certification Deadline is **July 15, 2016** 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.

The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the applicable acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the applicable acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.
- If a perennial forage crop is reported with the intended use of "cover only," "green manure," "left standing," or "seed," then the acreage must be reported by July 15th. Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting

date for NAP covered crops is the earlier of the applicable dates or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

For questions regarding crop certification and crop loss reports, please contact your local FSA office.

USDA Unveils New Improvement to Streamline Crop Reporting

Producers must still visit both locations to validate and sign acreage reports, complete maps or provide program-specific information.

Farmers and ranchers filing crop acreage reports with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and participating insurance providers approved by the Risk Management Agency (RMA) now can provide the common information from their acreage reports at one office and the information will be electronically shared with the other location.

This new process is part of the USDA Acreage Crop Reporting Streamlining Initiative (ACRSI). This interagency collaboration also includes participating private crop insurance agents and insurance companies, all working to streamline the information collected from farmers and ranchers who participate in USDA programs.

Once filed at one location, data that's important to both FSA and RMA will be securely and electronically shared with the other location avoiding redundant and duplicative reporting, as well as saving farmers and ranchers time.

Since 2009, USDA has been working to streamline the crop reporting process for agricultural producers, who have expressed concerns with providing the same basic common information for multiple locations. In 2013, USDA consolidated the deadlines to 15 dates for submitting these reports, down from the previous 54 dates at RMA and 17 dates for FSA. USDA representatives believe farmers and ranchers will experience a notable improvement in the coming weeks as they approach the peak season for crop reporting later this summer.

More than 93 percent of all annual reported acres to FSA and RMA now are eligible for the common data reporting, and USDA is exploring adding more crops. **Producers must still visit both locations to validate and sign acreage reports, complete maps or provide program-specific information.** The common data from the first-filed acreage report will now be available to pre-populate and accelerate completion of the second report. Plans are underway at USDA to continue building upon the framework with additional efficiencies at a future date.

Farmers and ranchers are also reminded that they can now access their FSA farm information from the convenience of their home computer. Producers can see field boundaries, images of the farm, conservation status, operator and owner information and much more.

The [new customer self-service portal](#), known as **FSAFarm+**, gives farmers and ranchers online access to securely view, print or export their personal farm data. To enroll in the online service, producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office for details. To find a local FSA office in your area, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Ongoing FSA Notice of Loss Requirements

Montana farmers and ranchers are reminded to timely report all crop and livestock losses to your local FSA office. For any questions, please contact your local FSA county office.

NAP – Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program: Submit Notice of Loss within 15 calendar days of the earlier of a natural disaster occurrence, the final planting date if planting is prevented by a natural disaster, the date that damage to the crop or loss of production becomes apparent; or the normal harvest date.

ELAP – Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program: Submit Notice of Loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent or Nov. 1st after the end of the program year in which the loss occurred.

LIP - Livestock Indemnity Program: Submit Notice of Loss within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent.

TAP - Tree Assistance Program: Final Date to Submit an Application and Supporting Documentation is the later of 90 calendar days of the disaster event or the date when the loss is apparent

2015 ARC-IC – Farm Benchmark and Actual Yield Certification

Producers, who have a 2015 ARC-IC program contract on one or more FSA farms, must complete the certification of ARC-IC yields for each ARC-IC farm and each covered commodity planted in 2015 by not later than July 15, 2016.

Production evidence that can be used to support the certified yields can be from the following sources:

- Crop Insurance loss records
- Sales records (buyer specific)
- Crop Insurance APH data base records
- Farm stored production records, appraisals

For more information, contact your local FSA office.

ARC-PLC: Aug. 1st Enrollment Deadline for 2016 USDA Safety Net Coverage

FSA has announced that **Aug. 1, 2016** is the deadline for producers to complete the annual enrollment process for the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs.

Producers previously made a program election of ARC or PLC for their eligible farms; the program election remains in effect through 2018. However, producers must still enroll their farm by signing a contract each year to be eligible for potential payments.

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.

For more information, producers are encouraged to visit their local FSA office. To find a local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Changing Administrative Counties - Aug. 1st Deadline

Producers who wish to transfer their farm records to a different administrative county for Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 must file a request no later than August 1, 2016. Restrictions do apply when transferring to an office other than the county in which the land is physically located. Contact your local FSA office for more information.

Reconstitution Request Deadline for ARCPLC farms - August 1st Deadline

For farms enrolled in ARCPLC, the deadline to initiate a 2016 farm combination or farm division is August 1, 2016. Program elections made on the parent farm will apply to any resulting farm of the reconstitution; only farms with identical program elections can be combined. Any reconstitution request received after August 1, 2016 will not be in effect until the 2017 crop year. Contact your local FSA office for more information.

ARC and PLC Acreage Maintenance

Producers enrolled in Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) must protect all cropland and noncropland acres on the farm from wind and water erosion and noxious weeds. Producers who sign ARC county or individual contracts and PLC contracts agree to effectively control noxious weeds on the farm according to sound agricultural practices. If a producer fails to take necessary actions to correct a maintenance problem on a farm that is enrolled in ARC or PLC the County Committee may elect to terminate the contract for the program year.

USDA Extends Deadline for Recording Farm Structure

Gives Non-Family Farming Operations More Time to Restructure in Response to 'Actively Engaged' Farm Management Rule

USDA announced a one-time, 30-day extension to the June 1 deadline for recording farm organization structures related to Actively Engaged in Farming determinations. This date is used to determine the level of interest an individual holds in a legal entity for the applicable program year.

Farming operations will now have until July 1 to complete their restructuring or finalize any operational change. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued the extension in response to farmers and ranchers who requested more time to comply, and to assure that everyone has enough time to provide their information under the new rules.

The 2014 Farm Bill provided the Secretary with the direction and authority to amend the Actively Engaged in Farming rules related to management. The final rule established limits on the number of individuals who can qualify as actively engaged using only management. Only one payment limit for management is allowed under the rule, with the ability to request up to two additional qualifying managers operations for large and complex operations.

The rule does not apply to farming operations comprised entirely of family members. The rule also does not change the existing regulations related to contributions of land, capital, equipment or labor, or the existing regulations related to landowners with a risk in the crop or to spouses. Producers that planted fall crops have until the 2017 crop year to comply with the new rules. The payment limit associated with Farm Service Agency farm payments is generally limited annually to \$125,000 per individual or entity.

USDA Resumes Incentives to Grow and Harvest Biomass for Energy and Biobased Products

Farm Service Agency (FSA) has announced that incentives resume this month for farmers and foresters who grow and harvest biomass for renewable energy and biobased products. The funds come through the Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP), which was reauthorized by the 2014 Farm Bill.

Facilities seeking to be qualified by USDA to accept biomass can begin enrollment between today, May 23, and June 6, 2016. BCAP provides financial assistance to farmers and ranchers who establish and maintain new crops of energy biomass, or who harvest and deliver forest or agricultural residues to a USDA-approved facility that creates energy or biobased products.

In fiscal year 2016, there is \$3 million available for BCAP. A portion of the funds will be provided to two existing BCAP projects in New York and Ohio/Pennsylvania to expand acres planted to shrub willow and giant miscanthus. Farmers and forest landowners may enroll for biomass establishment and maintenance payments for these two projects between June 15 and Sept. 13, 2016.

Also, between June 15 to Aug. 4, 2016, USDA will accept applications from foresters and farmers seeking incentives to remove biomass residues from fields or national forests for delivery to energy generation facilities. The retrieval payments are provided at match of \$1 for \$1, up to \$20 per dry ton. Eligible crops include corn residue, diseased or insect-infested wood materials, or orchard waste.

To learn more about BCAP or to enroll in updates, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/bcap or contact your local FSA county office. To find your local county office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

FSA Offers Improved Program to Limit Losses on Forages

Producers of mechanically harvested hay or forage having buy-up Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage with an approved notice of loss on file may be eligible for an adjustment to harvested production because of a loss of quality if the quality loss is **both** of the following:

- Attributable to an eligible cause of loss in the coverage period before harvest
- Documented with analysis that includes Relative Feed Value (RFV) from an approved laboratory.

This safety net is important for producers of mechanically harvested hay or forage. Previously, FSA only considered a decrease in overall forage tonnage produced when determining if the producer suffered a qualifying loss after an eligible adverse weather event. Under FSA's new NAP buy-up provisions, a decrease in forage quality is also considered.

To receive coverage for the 2017 crop year, producers must enroll their eligible forage in NAP and elect buy-up level coverage, by **Sept. 30, 2016**. Beginning, limited resource and targeted underserved farmers or ranchers are eligible for a waiver of the NAP service fee and a 50 percent premium reduction in buy-up provisions.

For more information on NAP, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/nap.

FSA Unveils Monthly Webinar Series

The FSA Outreach and Education Division will host a series of webinars each month to inform producers about FSA programs and initiatives. To register for any of the below listed webinars, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/outreach and click on "Outreach Webinars."

July 19 @ 12 p.m. MDT

Understanding Receipt for Service

To ensure that all USDA customers and potential customers are being served properly in local offices, the 2014 Farm Bill requires that a receipt be provided. Learn more about Receipt for Service, how it affects you and what you can expect when you visit a local Farm Service Agency county office.

Aug. 9 @ 12 p.m. MDT

Need Commodity Storage? The Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) Can Help

The Farm Storage Facility Loan Program provides low-interest financing so producers can build or upgrade permanent or portable facilities to store commodities. Learn how this program may be able to help your operation.

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in these webinars should contact Tanya Brown at 202-690-1700 or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339 at least three business days prior to the webinar.

The webinars will be recorded for future viewing and can be accessed on www.fsa.usda.gov/outreach.

Customers to Receive Documentation of USDA Services

Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds agricultural producers that FSA provides a receipt to customers who request or receive assistance or information on FSA programs.

The 2014 Farm Bill requires a customer receipt to be issued for any agricultural program assistance requested from FSA, the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Rural Development (RD). Receipts include the date, summary of the visit and any agricultural information, program and/or loan assistance provided to an individual or entity. Electronic receipts for acreage reports will begin on August 1, 2016.

A service is any information, program or loan assistance provided whether through a visit, email, fax or letter.

Ag News from USDA Rural Development - July 1st Deadline to Apply for Value-Added Producer Grant

USDA Rural Development is accepting applications for the Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program.

The VAPG program helps independent producers and agricultural producer groups, farmer-or-rancher-cooperatives, and majority-controlled producer-based business ventures enter into value-added activities related to the processing and/or marketing of bio-based value-added products. Generating new products, creating and expanding marketing opportunities, and increasing producer income are the goals of this program.

Value-added processing and marketing helps farmers and ranchers receive a higher portion of the retail dollar. Value-Added Producer Grants support planning activities, such as developing a business plan, as well as working capital.

Grants are awarded through a national competition. The maximum grant amount for planning grants is \$75,000 and \$250,000 for working capital grants. Matching resources are required.

The deadline to submit paper applications is July 1, 2016.

For more information contact the Rural Development office at 406-585-2540 or www.rd.usda.gov/mt.

USDA's Building Blocks for Climate Smart Agriculture & Forestry

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced a comprehensive and detailed approach to support farmers, ranchers, and forest land owners in their response to address the causes of climate change in April 2015. The framework consists of 10 building blocks that span a range of technologies and practices to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase carbon storage, and generate clean renewable energy through mitigation.

USDA's strategy focuses on climate-smart practices designed for working production systems that provide multiple economic and environmental benefits in addition to supporting resilience to extreme weather, reduced emissions and increased carbon storage.

Through this comprehensive set of voluntary programs and initiatives spanning its programs, USDA expects to reduce net emissions and enhance carbon sequestration by over **120 million metric tons** of CO₂ equivalent (MMTCO₂e) per year – about 2% of economy-wide net greenhouse emissions – by 2025. That's the equivalent of taking **25 million cars** off the road, or offsetting the emissions produced by powering nearly **11 million homes** last year.

For more information on the Building Blocks for Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry click the following link: <http://www.usda.gov/documents/climate-smart-fact-sheet.pdf> . For additional information on ways to consider greenhouse gases when managing land, refer to the USDA Climate Hub webpage: <http://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/>.

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).