



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Nebraska FSA and NRCS State Office Newsletter - January 2024

[Farm Service Agency](#) | [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) | [Risk Management Agency](#)

In This Issue:

- [A Message from the FSA Acting State Executive Director](#)
- [Dates to Remember](#)
- [Farmers Can Now Enroll for the Agriculture Risk Coverage, Price Loss Coverage Programs for the 2024 Crop Year](#)
- [USDA Reminds Producers of Livestock Indemnity Program to Assist with Weather-Related Losses](#)
- [USDA Now Accepting Farm Loan Payments Online](#)
- [FSA Loan Interest Rates](#)
- [Manage Your FSA Business Records](#)
- [Environmental Review Required Before Project Implementation](#)
- [USDA Reopens Signup for Continuous Conservation Reserve Program](#)
- [USDA Encourages Producers Participating in Conservation Reserve Program to Consider Forest Management Incentive](#)
- [NRCS Application Cutoff Approaching for Conservation Financial Assistance](#)

A Message from the FSA Acting State Executive Director

Our Nebraska USDA Farm Service Agency offices across the state serve you, our farmers, ranchers and rural landowners, in many different capacities. As we near February, already almost to our second month of the year, I want to remind you of several important things that are going on in our offices across the state.

While the weather has improved recently, we've been through a tough stretch in many areas. We issued a news release that highlights FSA programs that may be of assistance to you if you suffered negative impacts due to the extreme winter weather. [It can be found here](#). I would encourage you to read the article and then contact your county office for additional information on these programs.

Our county FSA offices also are busy working with producers on their selection of and enrollment in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC)

commodity crop safety net programs for 2024. We are working with partners at University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension on in-person [informational meetings at a number of locations](#) across the state. There also is a [recorded webinar](#) available that you can view at your convenience. More information can be found in the article below.

While there isn't a "deadline" specifically, our FSA farm loan team is busy hearing from folks who are in need of farm or ranch operating loans for the 2024 production season. If this is something you are considering, it's better to contact us sooner rather than later. We have a wide variety of loans to meet the financial needs of any operation for just about any purpose. FSA has a diverse program portfolio, and our goal is to help your operation be successful in 2024. Please note it doesn't matter the size, type or location of your farm or ranch business. We look forward to working with you throughout the year.

--Tim Divis

Dates to Remember

Jan. 31, 2024 – FSA deadline for producers to apply for an LDP for wool and unshorn pelts

Jan. 31, 2024 – FSA deadline for producers to apply for Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops Program for 2023 expenses

Feb. 19, 2024 – USDA Service Centers closed for federal holiday

Feb. 29, 2024 – FSA deadline for applications for Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) benefits for 2023 losses

March 15, 2024 – FSA deadline for Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage (ARC/PLC) program election and enrollment for 2024 production season

March 15, 2024 – ***FSA application closing date for Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage for 2024 production season for most annual fruits and vegetables, millet, oats, forage sorghum, dry peas, hemp

****Please note any above NAP calendar reference may not be inclusive for all NAP-covered crops; NAP participants should contact their County FSA Office to confirm important program deadlines.*

Farmers Can Now Enroll for the Agriculture Risk Coverage, Price Loss Coverage Programs for the 2024 Crop Year

Informational Sessions Planned in Nebraska

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced that agricultural producers can now enroll in the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) [Agriculture Risk Coverage \(ARC\)](#) and [Price Loss Coverage \(PLC\)](#) programs for the 2024 crop year. The deadline to complete enrollment and any election change is March 15, 2024.

2024 Elections and Enrollment

Producers can elect coverage and enroll in ARC-County (ARC-CO) or PLC, which provide crop-by-crop protection, or ARC-Individual (ARC-IC), which protects the entire farm. Although election changes for 2024 are optional, producers must enroll through a signed contract each year. Also, if a producer has a multi-year contract on the farm it will continue for 2024 unless an election change is made.

If producers do not submit their election revision by the March 15, 2024, deadline, their election remains the same as their 2023 election for commodities on the farm. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the cropland.

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, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

Informational Meetings Planned for Nebraska

Nebraska FSA is partnering with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Center for Agricultural Profitability (CAP) for ARC/PLC educational opportunities across the state. An educational webinar was held recently where FSA and CAP program specialists reviewed ARC/PLC program options. [To view the recording of this webinar, visit this link](#). There also will be in-person informational sessions at several locations in Nebraska. To find a current listing of these meetings, visit <https://cap.unl.edu/farmbill>.

Crop Insurance Considerations

ARC and PLC are part of a broader USDA safety net that also includes crop insurance and marketing assistance loans. Producers are reminded that ARC and PLC elections and enrollments can impact eligibility for some crop insurance products.

More Information

For more information on ARC and PLC, producers can visit the [ARC and PLC webpage](#) or contact their local [USDA Service Center](#). Producers can also make elections and complete enrollment [online with level 2 eAuth](#).

USDA Reminds Producers of Livestock Indemnity Program to Assist with Weather-Related Losses

Deadline to Apply for Assistance for 2023 Losses is Feb. 29, 2024

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides financial benefits to producers who suffer livestock losses above normal mortality due to adverse weather. Producers also can receive some compensation for livestock that have been injured as a direct result of an eligible adverse weather event and were sold at a reduced price due to that injury within 30 calendar days of the end date of the weather event.

Livestock producers who have experienced weather-related livestock losses or injury are reminded that reporting and documenting those losses is an important part of the LIP application process. A phone call to the county FSA office can serve as official notice of loss. Producers are encouraged to report losses as soon as possible.

Adequate documentation must be provided that proves the death or injury of eligible livestock occurred as a direct result of an eligible loss condition in the calendar year for which benefits are being requested. Documentation also must provide sufficient data that identifies the quantity and the livestock kind/type and weight range. Documents providing acceptable evidence may include, but are not limited to, any or a combination of the following:

- contemporaneous producer records existing at the time of event - pictures with a date
- rendering truck receipts or certificates
- veterinary records
- records assembled for tax purposes
- private insurance documents
- bank or other loan documents
- brand inspection records

Livestock owners or contract growers who suffered livestock losses will file a notice of loss and an application for payment at the USDA Service Center responsible for the physical location county where the livestock deaths or injuries occurred. **Producers have until Feb. 29, 2024**, to file a notice of loss and an application for payment and provide the supporting documentation for 2023 losses.

USDA Now Accepting Farm Loan Payments Online

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced recently most farm loan borrowers will soon be able to make payments to their direct loans online through the Pay My Loan feature on farmers.gov in early February. Pay My Loan is part of a broader effort by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) to streamline its processes, especially for producers who may have limited time during the planting or harvest seasons to visit a local FSA office; modernize and improve customer service; provide additional customer self-service tools; and expand credit access to assist more producers.

On average, local USDA Service Centers process more than 225,000 farm loan payments each year. Pay My Loan gives most borrowers an online repayment option and relieves them from needing to call, mail, or visit a Service Center to pay their loan installment. Farm loan payments can now be made at the borrower's convenience, on their schedule and outside of FSA office hours.

Pay My Loan also provides time savings for FSA's farm loan employees by minimizing manual payment processing activities. This new service for producers means that farm

loan employees will have more time to focus on reviewing and processing new loans or servicing requests.

The Pay My Loan feature can be accessed at farmers.gov/loans. To use the payment feature, producers must establish a USDA customer account and a [USDA Level 2 eAuthentication \(“eAuth”\) account or a Login.gov account](#). This initial release only allows individuals with loans to make online payments. For now, borrowers with jointly payable checks will need to continue to make loan payments through their local office.

FSA Loan Interest Rates

OPERATING/OWNERSHIP (February rates)

Farm Operating: 5.125%
Farm Operating – Limited Resource: 5%
Farm Ownership: 5.375%
Farm Ownership – Limited Resource: 5%
Farm Ownership - Joint Financing: 3.375%
Farm Ownership - Down Payment: 1.5%
Emergency - Actual Loss: 3.75%

FARM STORAGE FACILITY LOAN (January rates as February not yet published)

3-year term: 4.375%
5-year term: 4.125%
7-year term: 4.25%
10-year term: 4.125%
12-year term: 4.25%

MARKETING ASSISTANCE (January rate as February not yet published)

Commodity Loan: 6.125%

Manage Your FSA Business Records

It's important for Farm Service Agency customers to report changes in their operation to their county FSA office so their business records can be kept current. Changes in the farm/ranch operation, like the addition of a farm/ranch by lease or purchase, changes in shares or lease terms, new tenants, changes in land ownership, or creation of an entity, should be reported to the county FSA office. This also includes changes to customer address, zip code, phone number, email address or an incorrect name or business name on file.

FSA program payments are issued electronically into customer bank accounts, and in order to make timely payments, customers should notify FSA of changes to banking information (such as if a financial institution merges or is purchased or if an account is closed or changed). Payments can be delayed if FSA is not notified of changes to account and bank routing numbers.

Producers participating in FSA and NRCS programs also are required to timely report, as an update to their CCC-902 Farm Operating Plan, changes to their contributions of land, capital, equipment, labor or management to the operation.

If you have any changes or corrections, please call your local FSA office to update your records as soon as possible.

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.

USDA Reopens Signup for Continuous Conservation Reserve Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is now accepting applications for the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (Continuous CRP). USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) encourages agricultural producers and landowners in Nebraska who are interested in conservation opportunities for their land in exchange for yearly rental payments to consider the enrollment options available through Continuous CRP, which also includes the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) offered by FSA partners. Additionally, producers participating in CRP can now apply to re-enroll, if their contracts will expire this year.

To submit an offer, producers should contact the FSA at their local [USDA Service Center](#) by July 31, 2024, in order to have an offer effective by Oct. 1, 2024. To ensure enrollment acreages do not exceed the statutory cap, FSA will accept offers from producers on a first-come, first-served basis and will return offers for approval in batches throughout the year.

Additionally, producers with acres enrolled in Continuous CRP set to expire Sept. 30, 2024, can now offer acres for re-enrollment. A producer can both enroll new acres into Continuous CRP and re-enroll any acres expiring Sept. 30, 2024.

FSA water quality practices, such as riparian buffers, prairie strips, grassed waterways, and wetlands, will receive an additional 20% incentive. Buffer practices have a positive

impact on water quality. Additionally, the Climate-Smart Practice Incentive launched in 2021 is also available in the Continuous signup.

USDA Encourages Producers Participating in Conservation Reserve Program to Consider Forest Management Incentive

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is offering financial assistance to agricultural producers and private landowners enrolled in its Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) to improve the health of their forests. The Forest Management Incentive, available through Farm Service Agency (FSA), can help participants with forest management practices, such as brush management and prescribed burning.

The Forest Management Incentive is available to participants with active CRP contracts with forest cover that are not within two years of expiring. The incentive is a payment to eligible CRP participants who properly completed authorized forest management practice activities to improve the condition of resources, promote forest management and enhance wildlife habitat.

Forest management practices include brush management, herbaceous weed control, prescribed burning, firebreaks, development of early successional habitat and forest stand improvement. Additional information is available in our Forest Management Incentive [fact sheet](#).

Participants can now submit offers for the Forest Management Incentive. Interested producers should contact the FSA at their local [USDA Service Center](#).

NRCS Application Cutoff Approaching for Conservation Financial Assistance



Producers Have Until March 1, 2024, to Sign Up

Nebraska farmers and ranchers who are interested in planning and competing for potential funding from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) authorization should ACT NOW. Applications are currently being received for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) at your local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office for consideration under ACT NOW.

ACT NOW is a funding process where applications will have a shorter turnaround time compared to the traditional process and be processed in the order received. Based on the availability of funds, eligible applications with a score greater than a predetermined ranking threshold will be preapproved once assessed and ranked until funds have been depleted.

The ACT NOW process Nebraska will be using targets applications that implement

Climate Smart Agricultural and Forestry (CSAF) Mitigation activities such as cover crops, nutrient management, prescribed grazing for livestock, and irrigation efficiency improvements, to name a few. A complete list of eligible activities can be found [here](#) and at your local NRCS office.

The application cut off for Fiscal Year 2024 consideration is **Friday March 1, 2024**.

For more information about conservation programs and other assistance available, contact [your local NRCS field office](#) or visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/NE.



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Visit the Nebraska NRCS website at www.nrcs.usda.gov/ne.

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