

February 2017



Farm Service Agency

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NEWSLETTER



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New Jersey State FSA Newsletter

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Please contact your [local FSA Office](#) for questions specific to your operation or county

Upcoming Deadlines and Important Dates

- **February 20th** the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices will be closed in observance of President's Day.
- **March 15th** is the deadline to purchase coverage under the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) for:

Beans, Brussel Sprouts, Celery, Corn (processing), Cucumbers, Eggplant, Melons (all), Oats, Okra, Peppers, Potatoes, Sweet, Pumpkins, Rutabaga, Shallots, Sorghum (forage), Squash, Sunflower, Tomatillos, Tomatoes, Yam.

Eligible producers must apply for coverage and pay the applicable service fees annually by the application closing date. Acreage reports are also due annually. Coverage for specific crops may be checked online at www.fsa.usda.gov/nap.

- **March 31st** is the Deadline to obtain Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL) and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP) for prior year harvested wheat, barley, canola, crambe, flaxseed, honey, oats, rapeseed and sesame is March 31.

Contact or visit your County FSA office for a full customer calendar with program deadlines, NAP crop closure dates, observed holidays and more.

New Actively Engaged Provisions for Non-Family Joint Operations or Entities

Many Farm Service Agency programs require all program participants, either individuals or legal entities, to be “actively engaged in farming”. This means participants provide a significant contribution to the farming operation, whether it is capital, land, equipment, active personal labor and/or management. For entities, each partner, stockholder or member with an ownership interest, must contribute active personal labor and/or management to the operation on a regular basis.

The 2014 Farm Bill established additional payment eligibility provisions relating to the farm management component of meeting “actively engaged in farming”. These new provisions apply to joint operations comprised of non-family members or partners, stockholders or persons with an ownership in the farming operation. Effective for 2016 and subsequent crop years, non-family joint operations are afforded to one member that may use a significant contribution of active personal management exclusively to meet the requirements to be determined “actively engaged in farming”. The person or member will be defined as the Farm Manager for the purposes of administering these new management provisions.

In some instances, additional persons or members of a non-family member joint operation who meet the definition of Farm Manager may also be allowed to use such a contribution of active personal management to meet the eligibility requirements. However, under no circumstances may the number of Farm Managers in a non-family joint operation exceed a total of three in any given crop and program year.

USDA’s Farm Service Agency Expands Bridges to Opportunity Nationwide

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced the expansion of a unique service for farmers and ranchers. FSA’s Bridges to Opportunity program provides a one-stop-shop that connects producers with resources, programs and educational services offered across the department, as well as from other USDA partner organizations. Bridges to Opportunity, which currently provides enhanced customer support to more than 150,000 customers in 20 states, will expand to serve customers across the country before the end of the month using fiscal year 2016 funds.

FSA’s presence in over 2,100 county offices, in nearly every rural county, puts the agency in a unique position to partner with non-governmental organizations to reach thousands of agricultural producers who can benefit from the programs and services. Bridges to Opportunity allows FSA employees to search and obtain a list of all local, state, regional and national organizations that may be able assist local producers with their specific need. For example, FSA’s Houston County office in Texas partnered with many agricultural organizations to serve producers affected by severe drought. When drought-stricken agricultural producers came to the county office looking for assistance, FSA employees were able to provide traditional services, such as the Livestock Forage Program and the Emergency loan program administered by FSA, as well as connect local farmers with local, regional, and national organizations that provide drought assistance and education.

Bridges to Opportunity was developed by FSA to provide producers with a more comprehensive customer service experience by connecting them with other USDA agencies and nonfederal partners. Through Bridges to Opportunity, FSA county office employees have the tools to connect farmers, ranchers and anyone interested in agriculture with customized expertise on topics ranging including organic production, beginning farmer resources, integrated pest management, disaster assistance, conservation practices, agricultural educational courses, loans, grants and other financial assistance that can start, grow or benefit farming and ranching operations.

For more information about Bridges to Opportunity, please contact your local FSA county office.

FSAfarm+ and Conservation Client Gateway, FSA's and NRCS's Customer Self-Service Portals

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) have launched new tools to provide farmers and ranchers with remote access to their personal farm information using their home computers. Farmers and ranchers can now view, print or export their personal farm data all without visiting a county office.

The FSA program, known as **FSAfarm+**, provides you with secure access to view your personal FSA data, such as base and yields, Conservation Reserve Program data, other conservation program acreage, Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation status information, field boundaries, farm imagery, name and address details, contact information and membership interest and shares in the operation. This data will be available in real time, at no cost to the producer and allow operators and owners to export and print farm records, including maps. Producers also can electronically share their data with a crop insurance agent from their own personal computer.

Conservation Client Gateway is a secure web portal that lets you work with NRCS online. Landowners and land managers, whether operating as individuals or authorized representatives of business entities, can track their payments, report completed practices, request conservation assistance, and electronically sign documents. Conservation Client Gateway provides users the flexibility to determine when they want to engage with NRCS online and when they prefer in-person conservation planning assistance.

Farm operators and owners first will need "Level 2 eAuthentication" to access the web portals. This level of security ensures that personal information is protected for each user. Level 2 access can be obtained by going to www.eauth.usda.gov and completing the required information. Once you have registered for your Level 2 eAuthentication account, you will need to complete the identity verification process. This can either be done online, or by presenting your government issued photo ID in person at a USDA Service Center.

For more information on **FSAfarm+** or Conservation Client Gateway, the customer self-service portals, contact your local county office. To find your local county office, click <http://offices.usda.gov>.

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).

February 2017 Rate - 4.000%

To learn more about the FSA microloan program visit www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans, or contact your local FSA office.

Farm Storage Facility Loans

FSA's Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program provides low-interest financing to producers to build or upgrade storage facilities and to purchase portable (new or used) structures, equipment and storage and handling trucks.

The low-interest funds can be used to build or upgrade permanent facilities to store commodities. Eligible commodities include corn, grain sorghum, rice, soybeans, oats, peanuts, wheat, barley, minor oilseeds harvested as whole grain, pulse crops (lentils, chickpeas and dry peas), hay, honey, renewable biomass, fruits, nuts and vegetables for cold storage facilities, floriculture, hops, maple sap, rye, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, meat and poultry (unprocessed), eggs, and aquaculture (excluding systems that maintain live animals through uptake and discharge of water). Qualified facilities include grain bins, hay barns and cold storage facilities for eligible commodities.

Loans up to \$50,000 can be secured by a promissory note/security agreement and some loans between \$50,000 and \$100,000 will no longer require additional security.

Producers do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply. The loans are designed to assist a diverse range of farming operations, including small and mid-sized businesses, new farmers, operations supplying local food and farmers markets, non-traditional farm products, and underserved producers.

To learn more about the FSA Farm Storage Facility Loan, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport or contact your local FSA county office. To find your local FSA county office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

February 2017 Rates

- 3 year loan – 1.500%
- 5 year loan – 2.000%
- 7 year loan – 2.250%
- 10 year loan – 2.500%
- 12 year loan – 2.500 %

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