

May 2020



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

# NEWSLETTER

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## Arkansas FSA Newsletter

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### Arkansas Farm Service Agency

700 West Capitol, Room 3416  
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201  
Phone: 501-301-3000  
[www.fsa.usda.gov/ar](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ar)

**State Committee: Chairman:**  
Ron Chastain

**Members:**  
Gary Churchill, Sarah Dunklin,  
Nathan Reed, & Vivian Wright

**State Committee Meeting:**  
2nd Wednesday and  
Thursday of each Quarter

**State Executive Director:**  
David Curtis

### Message from the SED

FSA County Offices are still available to customers by phone appointment only until further notice. Our Staff is available to continue helping Producers with program signups, loan servicing and other important actions. Our Staff will continue to come into the office and work with our customers by phone, email and by using online tools whenever possible. For Service Center contact information, visit [farmers.gov/coronavirus](http://farmers.gov/coronavirus).

Also, I would like to remind producers that FSA offers farm ownership and farm operating loans to agricultural producers who may not find success obtaining loans from their traditional financial institutions because of COVID-19. Farmers who cannot obtain commercial credit from a bank can apply for FSA direct or guaranteed loans.

USDA has announced the availability of [\\$3 million in grants for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production](#). The competitive grants will support the development of urban agriculture and innovative production projects through two categories, Planning

**Executive Officer:**  
James Culpepper

Projects and Implementation Projects. USDA will accept applications on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) until midnight July 6, 2020.

**Administrative Officer:**  
Sharon Baker

USDA has also announced the availability of \$900,000 for local governments to host a Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction (CCFWR) pilot project for FY20. Applications for this grant will also be accepted on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). The deadline is midnight June 26, 2020. Projects should span two years with a start date of October 1, 2020 and completion date of September 29, 2022. Questions about this cooperative agreement opportunity can be sent to [UrbanAgriculture@usda.gov](mailto:UrbanAgriculture@usda.gov).

**Farm Programs:**  
Terri McManus

**Farm Loan Programs:**  
Lori Lavender

Please contact your local FSA Office for questions specific to your operation or county. To find contact information for your local office go to [www.fsa.usda.gov/ar](https://www.fsa.usda.gov/ar).

Additional information is also available online at [www.farmers.gov](https://www.farmers.gov).

Some see dirt, others see potential. It's all in how you view it. Continue to stay safe and practice social distancing.

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## AGFC offering payments to rice farmers for waterfowl habitat and hunting access (WRICE)

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission is accepting applications from rice field owners to enroll in its expanded Waterfowl Rice Incentive Conservation Enhancement program. Landowners may receive as much as \$150 per acre annually while still maintaining the current production of rice fields by following post-harvest guidelines and allowing permit-based hunts during waterfowl season on their properties. The program is aimed at enrolling rice fields within 10 miles of many AGFC wildlife management areas popular with duck hunters.

Now in its third year, the AGFC's WRICE program has been awarded a grant from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program. The grant will boost the program to the tune of \$2.1 million, distributed during the next three years to participating landowners.

Landowners with land already enrolled in Wetland Reserve Program easements also can apply for some of these funds if they are willing to allow public access for hunting and wildlife-viewing on their property.

The program's main goal is focused on increasing waterfowl resources on rice fields, a critical component of Arkansas's rich duck-hunting history. According to recent research, only about 20 percent of the 2 million acres of harvested rice fields in the Mississippi Alluvial Valley are flooded each year, and fall tillage appears to be on the increase in many parts of Arkansas. AGFC hopes to expand from last year's 941 acres of huntable WRICE fields to 3,750 acres this year.

Landowners interested in becoming part of this innovative conservation and hunter access program can visit [www.agfc.com/wrice](https://www.agfc.com/wrice) or contact their local private lands biologist through the website [www.agfc.com/habitat](https://www.agfc.com/habitat) to learn more. AGFC staff will host informational webinars at 6 p.m. May 12 and May 18. See [www.agfc.com/wrice](https://www.agfc.com/wrice) for details.

## USDA Reports Record Enrollment in Key Farm Safety-Net Programs

Producers signed a record 1.77 million contracts for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for the 2019 crop year, which is more than 107 percent of the total contracts signed compared with a 5-year average. USDA also reminds producers that June 30 is the deadline to enroll in ARC and PLC for the 2020 crop year.

Producers interested in enrolling for 2020 should contact their FSA county office. Producers must enroll by June 30 and make their one-time update to PLC payment yields by September 30.

FSA attributes the significant participation in the 2019 crop year ARC and PLC programs to increased producer interest in the programs under the 2018 Farm Bill and to an increase in eligible farms because of the selling and buying of farms and new opportunities for beginning farmers and military veterans with farms having 10 or fewer base acres. Enrollment for 2019 ended March 16.

USDA Service Centers, including FSA county offices, are open for business by phone only, and field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. While program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with producers by phone and using online tools whenever possible. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other Service Center agency are required to call their Service Center to schedule a phone appointment. More information can be found at [farmers.gov/coronavirus](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus).

For more information on ARC and PLC, download the [program fact sheet](#) or the [2014-2018 farm bills comparison fact sheet](#). Online ARC and PLC election decision tools are available at [www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc). To locate the nearest USDA Service Center, visit [farmers.gov/service-center-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-center-locator).

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## FSA Reminds Producers of Ongoing Disaster Assistance Program Signup

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has started making payments through the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program – Plus (WHIP+) to agricultural producers who suffered eligible losses because of drought or excess moisture in 2018 and 2019. Signup for these causes of loss opened March 23, and producers who suffered losses from drought (in counties designated D3 or above), excess moisture, hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, typhoons, volcanic activity, snowstorms or wildfires can still apply for assistance through WHIP+.

To be eligible for WHIP+, producers must have suffered losses of certain crops, trees, bushes or vines in counties with a Presidential Emergency Disaster Declaration or a Secretarial Disaster Designation (primary counties only) for qualifying natural disaster events that occurred in calendar years 2018 or 2019. Also, losses located in a county not designated by the Secretary as a primary county may be eligible if a producer provides documentation showing that the loss was due to a qualifying natural disaster event.

For losses due to drought, a producer is eligible if any area of the county in which the loss occurred was rated D3, or extreme drought, or higher on the U.S. Drought Monitor during calendar years 2018 or 2019. Producers who suffered losses should contact their FSA county office.

In addition to the recently added eligible losses of drought and excess moisture, FSA will implement a WHIP+ provision for crop quality loss that resulted in price deductions or penalties when marketing crops damaged by eligible disaster events. To ensure an effective program for all impacted farmers, the Agency is currently gathering information on the extent of quality loss from producers and stakeholder organizations.

USDA Service Centers, including FSA county offices, are open for business by phone only, and field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. While program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with producers by phone and using online tools

whenever possible. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other Service Center agency are required to call their Service Center to schedule a phone appointment. More information on Service Centers can be found at [farmers.gov/coronavirus](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus), and more information on WHIP+ can be found at [farmers.gov/whip-plus](https://farmers.gov/whip-plus).

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## USDA's Conservation Reserve Program Grasslands Signup

Farmers and ranchers may apply to enroll grasslands in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Grasslands signup. The signup runs through May 15.

Through CRP Grasslands, participants retain the right to conduct common grazing practices, such as haying, mowing or harvesting seed from the enrolled land. Timing of some activities may be restricted by the primary nesting season of birds.

Participants will receive an annual rental payment and may receive up to 50 percent cost-share for establishing approved conservation practices. The duration of the CRP contract is either 10 or 15 years. FSA will rank applications using a number of factors including existence of expiring CRP land, threat of conversion or development, existing grassland, and predominance of native species cover, and cost.

The 2018 Farm Bill set aside 2 million acres for CRP Grassland enrollment. CRP is one of the largest conservation programs at USDA. CRP marks its 35-year anniversary in 2020 with 22 million acres currently enrolled.

For more information or to enroll in CRP Grasslands, contact your local FSA county office or visit [fsa.usda.gov/crp](https://fsa.usda.gov/crp). To locate your local FSA office, visit [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator).

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## USDA Announces Loan Maturity for Marketing Assistance Loans Now Extended to 12 Months

Agricultural producers now have more time to repay Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL) as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's implementation of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020. The loans now mature at 12 months rather than nine, and this flexibility is available for most commodities.

Effective immediately, producers of eligible commodities now have up to 12 months to repay their commodity loans. The maturity extension applies to nonrecourse loans for crop years 2018, 2019 and 2020. Eligible open loans must be in good standing with a maturity date of March 31, 2020, or later or new crop year (2019 or 2020) loans requested by September 30, 2020. All new loans requested by September 30, 2020, will have a maturity date 12 months following the date of approval.

The maturity extension for current, active loans will be automatically extended an additional 3 months. Loans that matured March 31 have already been automatically extended by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA). Producers who prefer a nine-month loan will need to contact their local FSA county office. Loans requested after September 30, 2020, will have a term of nine months.

Eligible commodities include barley, chickpeas (small and large), corn, cotton (upland and extra-long staple), dry peas, grain sorghum, honey, lentils, mohair, oats, peanuts, rice (long and medium grain), soybeans, unshorn pelts, wheat, wool (graded and nongraded); and other oilseeds, including canola, crambe, flaxseed, mustard seed, rapeseed, safflower, sunflower seed, and sesame seed. Seed cotton and sugar are not eligible.

### About MALs

Placing commodities under loan provides producers interim financing to meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are low and allows producers to store production for more orderly marketing of commodities throughout the year.

These loans are considered nonrecourse because the commodity is pledged as loan collateral, and producers have the option of delivering the pledged collateral to the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) for repayment of the outstanding loan at maturity.

### **MAL Repayment**

Under the new maturity provisions, producers can still repay the loan as they would have before the extension:

- repay the MAL on or before the maturity date;
- upon maturity by delivering or forfeiting the commodity to CCC as loan repayment; or
- after maturity and before CCC acquires the farm-stored commodity by repaying the outstanding MAL principle and interest.

### **Marketing Loan Gains**

A Marketing Loan Gain occurs when a MAL is repaid at less than the loan principal. If market gain is applicable during the now-extended loan period, producers can receive a gain on the repayment made before the loan matures.

For more information on MALs, contact the nearest FSA county office. USDA Service Centers, including FSA county offices, are open for business by phone appointment only, and field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. While program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with producers by phone and using online tools whenever possible. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, or any other Service Center agency are required to call their Service Center to schedule a phone appointment. More information can be found at [farmers.gov/coronavirus](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus).

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## **FSA Offers Joint Financing Option on Direct Farm Ownership Loans**

The USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) [Direct Farm Ownership loans](#) are a resource to help farmers and ranchers become owner-operators of family farms, improve and expand current operations, increase agricultural productivity, and assist with land tenure to save farmland for future generations.

Depending on the applicant's needs, there are three types of Direct Farm Ownership Loans: regular, down payment and joint financing. FSA also offers a [Direct Farm Ownership Microloan](#) option for smaller financial needs up to \$50,000.

Joint financing allows FSA to provide more farmers and ranchers with access to capital. FSA lends up to 50 percent of the total amount financed. A commercial lender, a State program or the seller of the property being purchased, provides the balance of loan funds, with or without an FSA guarantee. The maximum loan amount for a Joint Financing loan is \$600,000 and the repayment period for the loan is up to 40 years.

To be eligible, the operation must be an eligible farm enterprise. Farm Ownership loan funds cannot be used to finance nonfarm enterprises and all applicants must be able to meet general eligibility requirements. Loan applicants are also required to have participated in the business operations of a farm or ranch for at least three years out of the 10 years prior to the date the application is submitted. The applicant must show documentation that their participation in the business operation of the farm or ranch was not solely as a laborer.

For more information about FSA Loan programs, contact your local FSA office or visit [fsa.usda.gov](http://fsa.usda.gov). To find your local FSA office, visit [offices.usda.gov](http://offices.usda.gov).

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## Loans for Targeted Underserved Producers

FSA has a number of loan programs available to assist applicants to begin or continue in agriculture production. Loans are available for operating type loans and/or to purchase or improve farms or ranches.

While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, FSA has provided priority funding for members of targeted underserved applicants.

A targeted underserved applicant is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of his or her identity as members of the group without regard to his or her individual qualities.

For purposes of this program, targeted underserved groups are women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere.

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## Farmers 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 Natural 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 began on Aug. 1, 2016.

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

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## ASKFSA

Are you looking for answers to your FSA questions? Then ASK FSA at [askfsa.custhelp.com](http://askfsa.custhelp.com).

AskFSA is an online resource that helps you easily find information and answers to your FSA questions no matter where you are or what device you use. It is for ALL customers, including underserved farmers and ranchers who wish to be enrolled in FSA loans, farm, and conservation programs.

### Through AskFSA you can:

- Access our knowledge base 24/7
- Receive answers to your questions faster
- Submit a question and receive a timely response from an FSA expert
- Get notifications when answers important to you and your farming operation are updated

Customize your account settings and view responses at any time

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## Rates and Dates

Dates to Remember		Dates to Remember	
5/15/20	CRP grassland signup deadline	5/31/20	Deadline to request MAL loan for corn, cotton, rice, grain sorghum, soybeans
5/30/20	Final date to file prevented planted acreage credit for	6/30/20	ARCPLC 2020 enrollment deadline
5/31/20	Deadline to request MAL loan for corn, cotton, rice,	05/10/20	Final date to file prevented planted acreage/credit for <b>Corn</b>  Note: This date applies to all counties except Benton, Clay, Craighead, Greene, Independence, Jackson, Lawrence, Mississippi, Poinsett, and Randolph Counties
6/30/20	ARCPLC 2020 enrollment deadline		
7/15/20	Acreage reporting spring seeded crops & other crops. (Note: crops insured under NAP may have an earlier acreage reporting date. Check with your local county office for verification)	5/16/20	Final date to file prevented planted acreage/credit for <b>Corn</b> for Benton, Clay, Craighead, Greene, Independence, Jackson, Lawrence, Mississippi, Poinsett, and Randolph Counties
		5/30/20	Final date to file prevented planted acreage/credit for <b>Grain Sorghum</b>

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).