

October 2015



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## Alaska State FSA Newsletter

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### Alaska State FSA Office

800 W Evergreen, Ste 216  
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[www.fsa.usda.gov/ak](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ak)

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### County Executive Director/Farm Loan Officer

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### USDA Reminds Farmers and Ranchers of Nov. 2 to Submit Your RTCP Receipts

The Reimbursement Transportation Cost Program (RTCP) signup ended on September 11, 2015. This program covered transportation expenses incurred from October 1, 2014 through September 30, 2015. If you applied for the RTCP program, and have not turned all your receipts in to the FSA office, now is the time to do so. Applicants will have until Nov. 2, 2015, to provide supporting documentation. If you have any questions, contact your local FSA office.

For more information on the RTCP, farmers and ranchers in the eligible areas can visit their FSA county office or review the fact sheet online at [www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA\\_File/rtcp\\_2015.pdf](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/rtcp_2015.pdf). To find your local FSA county office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov> and/or [www.fsa.usda.gov/ak](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ak).

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Hours Monday-Friday  
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Committee Meetings:  
Northern Co Oct. TBA  
Southern Co Nov. 3, 4:00 pm

Please contact your local FSA  
Office for questions specific to  
your operation or county.

## Producers are Reminded to Complete NASS Crop Surveys

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Field Offices are currently completing 2015 small grain yield surveys and will contact growers in December to complete row crop yield surveys. If you are one of the producers contacted to complete a 2015 yield survey, we encourage your participation and cooperation as many USDA agencies including the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Risk Management Agency (RMA) use the NASS yield data for their programs.

FSA uses NASS county yield data for farm credit, conservation, disaster programs, loans and commodity programs. Under the 2014 Farm Bill, FSA uses the NASS county yield data to calculate Agriculture Risk Coverage – County (ARC-CO) benchmark revenues and current year county revenues. For example, the 2014 NASS county yield, along with the crop's marketing year average price (MYA), are used to determine the county's current year revenue to determine if the county will trigger an ARC-CO payment. An ARC-CO payment is triggered for a county when the current year revenue falls below the guarantee revenue for the crop and crop year. In cases where NASS county yield data is not available, the FSA State Committee must determine a county yield using RMA yield data or the best available yield data, including assigning a county yield using neighboring county yields from NASS or RMA.

Any information that producers provide to NASS is kept confidential and protected by federal law. NASS publishes only aggregate-level data, ensuring that no individual operation or producer can be identified. All reports will be available at [www.nass.usda.gov](http://www.nass.usda.gov).

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## USDA Offers Help to Fire-Affected Farmers and Ranchers

The [U.S. Department of Agriculture](http://www.usda.gov) (USDA) reminds farmers and ranchers affected by the recent wildfires in Alaska, California, Idaho, Oregon, Montana and Washington State that USDA has programs to assist with their recovery efforts.

The [Farm Service Agency](http://www.fsa.usda.gov) (FSA) can assist farmers and ranchers who lost livestock, grazing land, fences or eligible trees, bushes and vines as a result of a natural disaster. FSA administers a suite of safety-net programs to help producers recover from eligible losses, including the [Livestock Indemnity Program](#), the [Livestock Forage Disaster Program](#), the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program](#), and the [Tree Assistance Program](#).

In addition, the FSA [Emergency Conservation Program](#) provides funding and technical assistance for farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters and for carrying out emergency water conservation measures in periods of severe drought. Producers located in counties that received a primary or contiguous disaster designation are eligible for low-interest [emergency loans](#) to help them recover from production and physical losses. Compensation is also available to producers who purchased coverage through the [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#), which protects non-insurable crops against natural disasters that result in lower yields, crop losses or prevented

planting.

The [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) (NRCS) can assist producers with damaged grazing land as well as farmers, ranchers and forestland owners who find themselves in emergency situations caused by natural disasters. The NRCS [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) provides financial assistance to producers who agree to defer grazing on damaged land for two years. In the event that presidentially declared natural disasters, such as wildfires, lead to imminent threats to life and property, NRCS can assist local government sponsors with the cost of implementing conservation practices to address natural resource concerns and hazards through the [Emergency Watershed Protection Program](#).

Farmers and ranchers with coverage through the federal crop insurance program administered by the [Risk Management Agency](#) (RMA) should contact their crop insurance agent to discuss losses due to fire or other natural causes of loss. Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the RMA [Agent Locator](#).

When wildfires destroy or severely damage residential property, [Rural Development](#) (RD) can assist with providing priority hardship application processing for single family housing. Under a disaster designation, RD can issue a priority letter for next available multi-family housing units. RD also provides low-interest loans to community facilities, water environmental programs, businesses and cooperatives and to rural utilities.

**For the first time in its 110-year history, the [Forest Service](#), part of USDA, is spending more than 50 percent of its budget to suppress the nation's wildfires.**

Today, fire seasons are 78 days longer than in the 1970s. Since 2000, at least 10 states have had their largest fires on record. **This year, there have been more than 46,000 fires.** Increasing development near forest boundaries also drives up costs, as more than 46 million homes and more than 70,000 communities are at risk from wildfire in the United States.

Visit <http://go.usa.gov/3eDeF> to learn more about USDA disaster preparedness and response. For more information on USDA disaster assistance programs, please contact your local USDA Service Center. To find your local USDA Service Center go to <http://offices.usda.gov>

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## **USDA Commits \$2.5 Million to Expand new Farmer Education**

Training Will also Help Returning Service Members, Underserved, and Urban Producers

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA has announced that \$2.5 million in grants is now available for projects to educate new and underserved farmers about more than 20 Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs that can provide financial, disaster or technical assistance to the agricultural community.

The grants will be awarded to nonprofits and public higher education institutions that develop proposals to improve farmer education on topics such as financial training, value-added production, recordkeeping, property inheritance, and crop production practices.

USDA will conduct four evaluation periods to review applications, with the deadlines of Nov. 20, 2015, Jan. 22, 2015, Mar. 18, 2016, and May 27, 2016. Awards between \$20,000 and \$100,000 per applicant will be available. To learn more about the funding solicitation and the related Farm Service Agency programs, details can be found at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) with the reference number USDA-FSA-CA-2015-001. For nonprofits and public institutions of higher education that are considering participation, an online informational session will be conducted on Sept 28 2015. Additional information is posted on

the Web at [www.fsa.usda.gov/outreach](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/outreach).

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## **Breaking New Ground**

Agricultural producers are reminded to consult with FSA and NRCS before breaking out new ground for production purposes as doing so without prior authorization may put a producer's federal farm program benefits in jeopardy. This is especially true for land that must meet Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions.

Producers with HEL determined soils are required to apply tillage, crop residue and rotational requirements as specified in their conservation plan.

Producers should notify FSA as a first point of contact prior to conducting land clearing or drainage type projects to ensure the proposed actions meet compliance criteria such as clearing any trees to create new cropland, then these areas will need to be reviewed to ensure such work will not risk your eligibility for benefits.

Landowners and operators complete the form AD-1026 - Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification to identify the proposed action and allow FSA to determine whether a referral to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for further review is necessary.

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## **USDA Packages Disaster Protection with Loans to Benefit Specialty Crop and Diversified**

Free basic coverage and discounted premiums available for new and underserved loan applicants

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) today announced that producers who apply for FSA farm loans also will be offered the opportunity to enroll in new disaster loss protections created by the 2014 Farm Bill. The new coverage, available from the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), is available to FSA loan applicants who grow non-insurable crops, so this is especially important to fruit and vegetable producers and other specialty crop growers.

New, underserved and limited income specialty growers who apply for farm loans could qualify for basic loss coverage at no cost, or higher coverage for a discounted premium.

The basic disaster coverage protects at 55 percent of the market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of production. Covered crops include "specialty" crops, for instance, vegetables, fruits, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, hay, forage, grazing and energy crops. FSA allows beginning, underserved or limited income producers to obtain NAP coverage up to 90 days after the normal application closing date when they also apply for FSA credit.

In addition to free basic coverage, beginning, underserved or limited income producers are eligible for a 50 percent discount on premiums for the higher levels of coverage that protect up to 65 percent of expected production at 100 percent of the average market price. Producers also may work with FSA to protect value-added production, such as organic or direct market crops, at their fair market value in those markets. Targeted underserved groups eligible for free or discounted coverage are American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, and women.

FSA offers a variety of loan products, including farm ownership loans, operating loans and microloans that have a streamlined application process.

Growers need not apply for an FSA loan, nor be a beginning, limited resource, or underserved farmer, to be eligible for Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program assistance. To learn more, visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/nap](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/nap) or [www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans), or contact your local FSA office at <https://offices.usda.gov>.

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## Guaranteed Loan Program

FSA guaranteed loans allow lenders to provide agricultural credit to farmers who do not meet the lender's normal underwriting criteria. Farmers and ranchers apply for a guaranteed loan through a lender, and the lender arranges for the guarantee. FSA can guarantee up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan. Guaranteed loans can be used for both farm ownership and operating purposes.

Guaranteed farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, construct or repair buildings, develop farmland to promote soil and water conservation or to refinance debt.

Guaranteed operating loans can be used to purchase livestock, farm equipment, feed, seed, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance and other operating expenses.

FSA can guarantee farm ownership and operating loans up to \$1,392,000. Repayment terms vary depending on the type of loan, collateral and the producer's ability to repay the loan. Operating loans are normally repaid within seven years and farm ownership loans are not to exceed 40 years.

Please contact your lender or local FSA farm loan office for more information on guaranteed loans.

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USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. 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).

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