



NEWSLETTER



Idaho Farm Service Agency

**June 2014
County Newsletter**

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Highly Erodible Land & Wetland Conservation Compliance

The approval of the 2014 Farm Bill has brought to the forefront some of the rules for compliance with soils and wetlands. Because so much of Idaho's cropland areas are classified as Highly Erodible Land (HEL) the importance of following a fully applied conservation system is of critical importance for producers to maintain eligibility with USDA programs. Eligibility includes not only FSA disaster, and safety net programs, but also the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), the Conservation Security Program (CSP) and in 2015 compliance also includes Federal Crop Insurance (FCIC) programs. Violations of HEL compliance will result in fines and loss of the beneficial benefits gained in the year of violation.

A plan or system describes the crop rotation, tillage and practices applied to the ground as well as irrigation water application. NRCS continues its yearly review of 5% of the farms for annual spot check reviews that received ANY PAYMENTS from any USDA program. As part of the 1985 Food Security Act, farms had plans constructed with NRCS. It is being recommended that you review your plan with your local conservation planner and note the changes so that eligibility is not lost. If spot checked you may be called upon to share the details of your system of operation to determine if compliance is being achieved. Voluntary compliance reviews with NRCS give a one year waiver in case of violation that would otherwise implement fines and returns of beneficial payments.

CONTINUOUS RESERVE PROGRAM SIGN-UP BEGAN JUNE 9

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) provides incentives to producers who utilize conservation methods on environmentally-sensitive lands. For example, farmers are monetarily compensated for establishing long-term vegetative species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as "covers") to control soil erosion, improve water quality, and enhance wildlife habitat.

The CRP program discontinued sign ups on September 30, 2013 with the close of the 2008 Farm Bill. CRP was reauthorized by the 2014 Farm Bill but the program was not ready for new sign ups. On June 4, 2014, Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that FSA could begin sign ups on June 9, 2014.

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CRP consists of a "continuous" and "general" sign-up period. Continuous sign up for the voluntary program started June 9. Under continuous sign-up authority, eligible land can be enrolled in CRP at any time with contracts of up to 10 to 15 years in duration. In lieu of a general sign-up this year, USDA will allow most producers with general CRP contracts expiring this September to have the option of a one-year contract extension. USDA will also implement the 2014 Farm Bill's requirement that producers enrolled through general sign-up for more than five years can exercise the option to opt-out of the program if certain other conditions are met. In addition, the new grassland provisions, which will allow producers to graze their enrolled land, will enable producers to do so with more flexibility.

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), which administers CRP, will coordinate the various CRP program opportunities. For more information on CRP and other FSA programs, visit a local FSA county office or go online to www.fsa.usda.gov.

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Livestock Disaster Assistance Sign-up Underway

Livestock disaster program enrollment opened on April 15, 2014. These disaster programs are authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill as permanent programs and provide retroactive authority to cover losses that occurred on or after Oct. 1, 2011.

To expedite applications, all producers who experienced losses are encouraged to bring records documenting those losses to their local FSA Office. Producers should record all pertinent information of natural disaster consequences, including:

- Documentation of the number and kind of livestock that have died, supplemented if possible by photographs or video records of ownership and losses
- Dates of death supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts
- Additional feed purchases if supplies or grazing pastures are destroyed
- Copies of permits or leases for grazing lands

Eligible producers can sign-up for the following livestock disaster assistance programs:

Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP):

LFP provides compensation to eligible livestock producers that have suffered grazing losses due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land or fire on federally managed land. Eligible producers must physically be located in a county affected by a qualifying drought during the normal grazing period for the county. Producers who suffered eligible grazing losses should submit a completed CCC-853 and supporting documentation by January 30, 2015.

Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP):

LIP provides compensation to eligible livestock producers that have suffered livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law. Producers who suffered livestock death losses should submit a notice of loss and an application for payment to their local FSA office by January 30, 2015.

Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)

ELAP provides emergency assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybees and farm-raised fish that have losses due to disease, adverse weather, or other conditions, such as blizzards and wildfires. ELAP assistance is provided for losses not covered by LFP and LIP. Producers who suffered eligible livestock, honeybee or farm-raised fish losses during 2012 and 2013 program years must submit a notice of loss and application for payment to their local FSA office by August 1, 2014. For 2014 program year losses, the notice of loss and an application for payment must be submitted by November 1, 2014.

For more information, producers can review the LFP, LIP and ELAP Fact Sheets on the Farm Bill webpage. Producers are encouraged to make an appointment with their local FSA office to apply for these programs.

Save Time – Make an Appointment with FSA

As we roll out the Farm Bill programs administered by FSA, there will be related signups and in some cases multiple management decisions that need to be made by you, the producer, in consultation with FSA staff. To insure maximum use of your time and to insure that you are afforded our full attention to your important business needs, please call our office ahead of your visit to set an appointment and to discuss any records or documentation that you may need to have with you when you arrive for your appointment. For local FSA Service Center contact information, please visit:

<http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>.

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New Farm Bill Offers Increased Opportunities for Producers

The 2014 Farm Bill offers increased opportunities for producers including farm loan program modifications that create flexibility for new and existing farmers. A fact sheet outlining modifications to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) Farm Loan Programs is available [here](#).

The Farm Bill expands lending opportunities for thousands of farmers and ranchers to begin and continue operations, including greater flexibility in determining eligibility, raising loan limits, and emphasizing beginning and socially disadvantaged producers.

Changes that will take effect immediately include:

- Elimination of the 15 year term limit for guaranteed operating loans.
- Modification of the definition of beginning farmer, using the average farm size for the county as a qualifier instead of the median farm size.
- Modification of the Joint Financing Direct Farm Ownership Interest Rate to 2 percent less than regular Direct Farm Ownership rate, with a floor of 2.5 percent. Previously, the rate was established at 5 percent.
- Increase of the maximum loan amount for Direct Farm Ownership Down Payment Loan Program from \$225,000 to \$300,000.
- Elimination of rural residency requirement for Youth Loans, allowing urban youth to benefit.
- Debt forgiveness on Youth Loans, which will not prevent borrowers from obtaining additional loans from the federal government.
- Increase of the guaranteed percentage on Conservation Loans from 75 to 80 percent and 90 percent for socially disadvantaged borrowers and beginning farmers.
- Microloans will not count toward direct operating loan term limits for veterans and beginning farmers.

Additional modifications must be implemented through the rulemaking processes. Visit the [FSA Farm Bill website](#) for detailed information and updates to farm loan programs.

Hay Net

Producers are encouraged to use Hay Net on the FSA website (<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/haynet>). This online service allows producers with hay and those who need hay to post ads so they can make connections. Hay Net is a popular site for farmers and ranchers who have an emergency need. Individual ads can be posted free of charge by producers who complete a simple online registration form the first time they use the site.

Guaranteed Loan Eligibility

Changes to FSA regulations have removed Guaranteed Operating Loan term limits. Previous and current guaranteed loan borrowers who were not eligible for further guaranteed loans due to the previous 15 year eligibility term limit may now be eligible for further guaranteed loans through their commercial lender.

Controlled Substance

Any person convicted under federal or state law of a controlled substance violation could be ineligible for USDA payments or benefits. Violations include planting, harvesting or growing a prohibited plant. Prohibited plants include marijuana, opium, poppies and other drug producing plants.

Farm Reconstitutions

When changes in farm ownership or operation take place, a farm reconstitution is necessary. The reconstitution — or recon — is the process of combining or dividing farms or tracts of land based on the farming operation.

Following are the different methods used when doing a farm recon.

Estate Method — the division of bases, allotments and quotas for a parent farm among heirs in settling an estate;

Designation of Landowner Method — may be used when (1) part of a farm is sold or ownership is transferred; (2) an entire farm is sold to two or more persons; (3) farm ownership is transferred to two or more persons; (4) part of a tract is sold or ownership is transferred; (5) a tract is sold to two or more persons; or (6) tract ownership is transferred to two or more persons. In order to use this method the land sold must have been owned for at least three years, or a waiver granted, and the buyer and seller must sign a Memorandum of Understanding;

DCP Cropland Method — the division of bases in the same proportion that the DCP cropland for each resulting tract relates to the DCP cropland on the parent tract;

Default Method — the division of bases for a parent farm with each tract maintaining the bases attributed to the tract level when the reconstitution is initiated in the system.

2013 ACRE DEADLINE

Participation in 2013 ACRE requires that production reports for planted acres must be submitted for the covered commodities planted on the farm by **July 15, 2014**. Failure to report production for those covered commodities planted on ACRE farms may result in contract termination. If the contract is terminated, all payments, including direct payments previously received plus interest will be required to be refunded.

Selected Interest Rates for June 2014	
Farm Operating Loans — Direct	2.25%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct	4.00%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.50%
Emergency Loans	3.25%
Farm Storage Facility Loans (7 years)	2.25%

Dates to Remember	
June 9	Continuous CRP sign up resumed
June 15	Nomination for County Office Committee (COC) begins
July 15	Reporting deadline for spring-seeded alfalfa seed and all other crops
August 1	Final Date to submit COC nominations
August 1	ELAP application deadline
Sept. 30	NAP deadline for fall seeded crops and grass crops in Northern District

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.