

June 2014



- [Farm Service Agency County Committee Nomination Period Begins June 15](#)
- [Programs to Conserve Sensitive Land and Help Beginning Farmers](#)
- [Restart of the Biomass Crop Assistance Program](#)
- [Tree Assistance Program \(TAP\) Sign-up Underway](#)
- [Farm Bill Website and Online Overview of Farm Bill Programs](#)
- [Accepting Marketing Assistance Loans \(MAL\) and Loan Deficiency Payments \(LDP\) Requests; Sets 2014 MAL Loan Rates](#)
- [Dairy Indemnity Payment Program](#)
- [2013 Crop Year ACRE Production Report Deadline is July 15th.](#)
- [MICROLOAN Program](#)
- [Enhancements to Farm Storage Facility Loan Program](#)
- [USDA Seeks Sponsors for Summer Food Service Program \(SFSP\)](#)
- [USDA Kicks Off the 2014 "FEDS FEED FAMILIES" Nationwide Food Drive](#)
- [Deadline Dates and Interest Rates](#)

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## Colorado State FSA - June 2014 enewsletter

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### Farm Service Agency County Committee Nomination Period Begins June 15

The nomination period for local Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees begins Sunday, June 15, 2014.

To be eligible to serve on an FSA county committee, a person must be eligible to participate or cooperate in a program administered by FSA, be eligible to vote in a county committee election and reside in the local administrative area where the person is nominated.

Farmers and ranchers may nominate themselves or others. Organizations representing minorities and women also may nominate candidates. To become a candidate, an eligible individual must sign the nomination form, FSA-669A. The form and other information about FSA county committee elections are available at [www.fsa.usda.gov/elections](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/elections). Nomination forms for the 2014 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA Service Center by close of business on Aug. 1, 2014. Elections will take place this fall.

While FSA county committees do not approve or deny farm ownership or operating loans, they make decisions on disaster and conservation programs, emergency programs, commodity price support loan programs and other agricultural issues. Members serve three-year terms. Nationwide, there are about 7,800 farmers and ranchers serving on FSA county committees. Committees consist of three to 11 members that are elected by eligible producers.

FSA will mail ballots to eligible voters beginning Nov. 3, 2014. Ballots are due back to the local county office either via mail or in person by Dec. 1,

2014. Newly elected committee members and alternates take office on Jan. 1, 2015.

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## Programs to Conserve Sensitive Land and Help Beginning Farmers

Farmers, ranchers and landowners committed to protecting and conserving environmentally sensitive land may now sign up for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Additionally, retiring farmers enrolled in CRP could receive incentives to transfer a portion of their land to beginning, disadvantaged or veteran farmers through the Transition Incentives Program (TIP).

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.

CRP consists of a “continuous” and “general” sign-up period. Continuous sign up for the voluntary program starts 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 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 Transition Incentives Program provides two additional years of payments for retired farmers and ranchers who transition expiring CRP acres to socially disadvantaged, military veteran, or beginning producers who return the land to sustainable grazing or crop production. Sign up will also begin June 9. TIP funding was increased by more than 30 percent in the 2014 Farm Bill, providing up to \$33 million through 2018.

As part of the 2014 Farm Bill, participants meeting specific qualifications may have the opportunity to terminate their CRP contract during fiscal year 2015 if the contract has been in effect for a minimum of five years and if other conditions are also met.

For more information on CRP and other FSA programs, visit a local FSA county office or go online to [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

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## Restart of the Biomass Crop Assistance Program

The Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) was reauthorized by the 2014 Farm Bill and will resume on a limited basis [on June 9] upon the publication of a Notice of Funding Availability.

BCAP employs three types of biomass assistance primarily through approved BCAP project areas. For growing new biomass, BCAP provides financial assistance with 50 percent of the cost of establishing a perennial crop. To maintain the crop as it matures until harvest, BCAP provides an annual payment for up to 5 years for herbaceous crops, or up to 15 years for woody crops. To collect existing agriculture or forest residues that are not economically retrievable, BCAP provides assistance with mitigating the cost of harvesting and transporting the materials to the end-use facility.

The 2014 Farm Bill authorizes \$25 million annually for BCAP, requiring between 10 and 50 percent of the total funding to be used for harvest and transportation of biomass residues. Traditional food and feed crops are ineligible for assistance. The 2014 Farm Bill also enacted several modifications for BCAP, including higher incentives for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, and narrower biomass qualifications for matching payments, among other changes.

Only the matching payments portion of the BCAP, with narrower biomass qualifications, will resume this summer. Additional information will be provided as the updated BCAP regulations and policies are implemented. With the 2014 Farm Bill requiring several regulatory updates to BCAP, the resumption of establishment and annual payments has been deferred until a later date.

For forest residues, this year's matching payments are targeted for energy generation while reducing fire, insect and disease threats on Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands. Agriculture residues for energy are also eligible for matching payments.

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), which administers BCAP, will coordinate the BCAP enrollments. For more information on BCAP and other FSA programs, visit a local FSA office or go online to [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

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## **Tree Assistance Program (TAP) Sign-up Underway**

As of Tuesday, April 15, 2014, orchardists and nursery tree growers who experienced losses from natural disasters that occurred on or after Oct. 1, 2011, can sign up for the Tree Assistance Program (TAP). TAP was authorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014 as a permanent disaster program. TAP provides financial assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines damaged by natural disasters.

Eligible tree types include trees, bushes or vines that produce an annual crop for commercial purposes. Nursery trees include ornamental, fruit, nut and Christmas trees that are produced for commercial sale. Trees used for pulp or timber are ineligible.

To qualify for TAP, orchardists must suffer a qualifying tree, bush or vine loss in excess of 15 percent mortality from an eligible natural disaster. The eligible trees, bushes or vines must have been owned when the natural disaster occurred; however, eligible growers are not required to own the land on which the eligible trees, bushes and vines were planted.

If the TAP application is approved, the eligible trees, bushes and vines must be replaced within 12 months from the date the application is approved. The cumulative total quantity of acres planted to trees, bushes or vines, for which a producer can receive TAP payments, cannot exceed 500 acres annually.

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## **Farm Bill Website and Online Overview of Farm Bill Programs**

The Agricultural Act of 2014 (the Act), also known as the 2014 Farm Bill, was signed by President Obama on Feb. 7, 2014. The Act repeals certain programs, continues some programs with modifications, and authorizes several new programs administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA). Most of these programs are authorized and funded through 2018.

For the latest on 2014 Farm Bill programs administered by FSA, please visit our Farm Bill website at [www.fsa.usda.gov/farmbill](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/farmbill) and for an FSA program overview please read, download and/or print our recently posted FSA Farm Bill Fact Sheet titled, What's in the 2014 Farm Bill for Farm Service Agency Customers?

For more information on FSA, please contact your local USDA Service Center or visit us online at [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

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## **Accepting Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL) and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP) Requests; Sets 2014 MAL Loan Rates**

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) will begin accepting requests for marketing assistance loans (MALs) and loan deficiency payments (LDPs) for eligible 2014 commodities.

MALs and LDPs for the 2014 crop year become available to eligible producers beginning with harvest/shearing season and extending through a specific commodity's final loan availability date. Sugar commodity loans for the 2014 crop will be available to sugar processors beginning Oct. 1, 2014.

MALs and LDPs provide financing and marketing assistance for wheat, feed grains, soybeans, and other oilseeds, pulse crops, rice, peanuts, cotton, wool, mohair and honey. MALs provide producers interim financing after harvest to help them meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are

typically at harvest-time lows. A producer who is eligible to obtain a loan, but agrees to forgo the loan, may obtain an LDP if such a payment is available. Marketing loan provisions and LDPs are not available for sugar and extra-long staple cotton.

The 2014 Farm Bill also establishes payment limitations per individual or entity not to exceed \$125,000 annually on certain commodities for the following program benefits: price loss coverage payments, agriculture risk coverage payments, marketing loan gains (MLGs) and LDPs. These payment limitations do not apply to MAL loan disbursements.

Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) provisions were modified by the 2014 Farm Bill, which states that a producer whose total applicable three-year average AGI exceeds \$900,000 is not eligible to receive an MLG or LDP.

National and county loans rates for 2014 crops are posted on the FSA website at: [www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport).

For more information, please visit a nearby USDA Service Center or FSA's website [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

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## Dairy Indemnity Payment Program

The 2014 Farm Bill authorized the extension of the Dairy Indemnity Payment Program (DIPP) through September 30, 2018. DIPP provides payments to dairy producers and manufacturers of dairy products when they are directed to remove their raw milk or products from the market because of contamination.

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## 2013 Crop Year ACRE Production Report Deadline is July 15th.

Participation in 2013 ACRE requires production reports for planted acres that must be submitted for the covered commodities and peanuts planted on the farm by July 15, 2014. Failure to report production for those covered commodities and peanuts 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.

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## MICROLOAN Program

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) developed the Microloan (ML) program to better serve the unique financial operating needs of beginning, niche and small family farm operations.

FSA offers applicants a Microloan designed to help farmers with credit needs of \$35,000 or less. The loan features a streamlined application process built to fit the needs of new and smaller producers. This loan program will also be useful to specialty crop producers and operators of community supported agriculture (CSA).

Eligible applicants can apply for a maximum amount of \$35,000 to pay for initial start-up expenses such as hoop houses to extend the growing season, essential tools, irrigation and annual expenses such as seed, fertilizer, utilities, land rents, marketing, and distribution expenses. As financing needs increase, applicants can apply for a regular operating loan up to the maximum amount of \$300,000 or obtain financing from a commercial lender under FSA's Guaranteed Loan Program.

Individuals who are interested in applying for a microloan or would like to discuss other farm loan programs available should contact their local FSA office to set up an appointment with a loan official.

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## Enhancements to Farm Storage Facility Loan Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced the expansion of the Farm Storage and Facility Loan program, which provides low-interest financing to producers. The enhanced program includes 22 new categories of eligible equipment for fruit and vegetable producers.

Producers with small and mid-sized operations, and specialty crop fruit and vegetable growers, now have access

to needed capital for a variety of supplies including sorting bins, wash stations and other food safety-related equipment. A new more flexible alternative is also provided for determining storage needs for fruit and vegetable producers, and waivers are available on a case-by-case basis for disaster assistance or insurance coverage if available products are not relevant or feasible for a particular producer.

Additionally, Farm Storage Facility Loan security requirements have been eased for loans up to \$100,000. Previously, all loans in excess of \$50,000 and any loan with little resale value required a promissory note/security agreement and additional security, such as a lien on real estate. Now loans up to \$50,000 can be secured by only a promissory note/security agreement and some loans between \$50,000 and \$100,000 will no longer require additional security.

The low-interest funds can be used to build or upgrade permanent facilities to store commodities. Eligible commodities include grains, oilseeds, peanuts, pulse crops, hay, honey, renewable biomass commodities, fruits and vegetables. Qualified facilities include grain bins, hay barns and cold storage facilities for fruits and vegetables.

Contact your local FSA office or visit [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov) for more about FSA programs and loans, including the Farm Storage Facility Loan Program.

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## **USDA Seeks Sponsors for Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)**

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is looking for sponsors to ensure that low-income children continue to receive nutritious meals when school is not in session. SFSP is administered by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

SFSP reimburses approved sponsors for serving meals that meet Federal nutritional guidelines. Sponsors receive payments from USDA based on the number of meals they serve. All meals are served free to eligible children, who are 18 years old and under at approved SFSP sites in areas with significant concentrations of low-income children.

Sponsors are organizations that manage SFSP feeding sites. Sponsors must be organizations that are fully capable of managing a food service program. To be a sponsor, you must follow regulations and be responsible, financially and administratively, for running your program.

The following types of organizations can be sponsors:

- Public or private nonprofit schools
- Units of local, municipal, county, tribal, or State government
- Private nonprofit organizations
- Public or private nonprofit camps
- Public or private nonprofit universities or colleges

A sponsor may prepare its own meals, purchase meals through an agreement with an area school, or contract for meals with a food service management company (vendor).

For questions or to apply, please contact Bart Bushman at 303-844-0310 or Email [bart.bushman@fns.usda.gov](mailto:bart.bushman@fns.usda.gov) or visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-food-service-program-sfsp>.

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## **USDA Kicks Off the 2014 "FEDS FEED FAMILIES" Nationwide Food Drive**

USDA kicked off the 6th annual Feds Feed Families Campaign on June 2, 2014.

The food drive is an annual event in which Federal employees, nationwide, collect food for distribution by food banks, food pantries, and shelters.

The Feds Feed Families program started in 2009. The 2014 food drive officially began on June 2 and will run

through August 27.

All Federal agencies across the country participate in the campaign and Federal employees are asked to donate non-perishable food items throughout the summer. Donations are given to local food banks across the country – having a positive impact to help food banks address food insecurity. Secretary Vilsack noted that the latest USDA estimates show that in 2012, food insecurity affected 14.5 percent of American households at some point.

If you are interested in making a donation to the annual "Feds Feed Families" Food Drive, please contact your local USDA Service Center at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

For more information on the Feds Feed Families campaign, please visit: <http://www.usda.gov/fedsfeedfamilies>.

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## Deadline Dates and Interest Rates

**June 15, 2014** – Deadline for 2014 acreage reporting for onions

**June 15, 2014** – COC nomination period begins.

**July 15, 2014** – Acreage Reporting Deadline for all Spring Seeded 2014 - Crops and CRP

**July 15, 2014** – Deadline for 2013 ACRE Production Reports

**July 15, 2014** – Deadline to report 2013 NAP Production Evidence

**August 1, 2014** – Last day to file COC nomination forms

**August 1, 2014** – 2012 and 2013 ELAP Sign-up Deadline

**August 1, 2014** – Deadline to request a reconstitution for 2014

**August 29, 2014** – 2012 SURE Sign-up Deadline

### Interest Rates for June:

90-Day Treasury Bill - .125%

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%

Sugar Storage Facility Loans - 3.00%

Commodity Loans 1996-Present - 1.125%

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