

April 2014



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## Newaygo/Muskegon County FSA Updates

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### Newaygo/Muskegon County FSA Office

940 West Rex Street  
Fremont, MI 49412  
Phone: 231-924-2230 x 2  
Fax: 855-647-4845  
Hours: Monday - Friday  
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

**County Executive Director:**  
David Bain

**Program Technicians:**  
Kathy Nelson  
Lisa Smalligan

**County Committee:**  
Brian Abbott  
Aaron Bennett  
Steve Boluyt  
Dennis Sikkenga  
David Stout  
Jean Stroven, Advisor

#### Overview

The USDA Tree Assistance 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 occurring on or after October 1, 2011. TAP was authorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014 as a permanent disaster program.

#### Eligible Tree Types:

Eligible trees, bushes and vines are those from which an annual crop is produced for commercial purposes. Nursery trees include ornamental, fruit, nut and Christmas trees produced for commercial sale. Trees used for pulp or timber are ineligible.

#### Eligible Producers:

**To qualify for TAP, orchardists and nursery tree growers must:**

- Have suffered qualifying tree, bush or vine losses in excess of 15 percent (adjusted for normal mortality) from an eligible natural disaster for the individual stand;
- Have owned the eligible trees, bushes and vines when the natural disaster occurred, but eligible growers are not required to own the land on which eligible trees, bushes and vines are planted;

**Farm Loan Managers:**

Paul Wagner, Muskegon  
Phone: 616-842-5852 x 2

Larry Cleary, Newaygo  
Phone: 231-796-2659 x 2

**Next County Committee Meeting:** to be determined

- Replace eligible trees, bushes and vines within 12 months from the date the application is approved.
- Have site visit if trees, bushes or vines are not already destroyed (apply before destruction).

For more information on the TAP program please call the Newaygo/Muskegon County Farm Service Agency. To expedite applications, all producers who experienced losses are encouraged to **collect records** documenting these losses in preparation for the enrollment into these disaster assistance programs. Information on the types of records necessary can be provided by local FSA county offices. Producers also are encouraged to contact their county office ahead of time to schedule an appointment.

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## USDA Announces The Extension Of The Milk Income Loss Contract Program For 2014

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) recently announced the extension of the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) program which protects dairy farmers against income loss through Sept. 1, 2014, or until a new Margin Protection Program for dairy producers (MPP) is operational.

Contracts for eligible producers enrolled in MILC on or before Sept. 30, 2013, are automatically extended until the termination date of the MILC program. Dairy operations with approved MILC contracts will continue to receive monthly payments if a payment rate is in effect. Producers will not be required to certify to average adjusted gross income (AGI) to participate in MILC for 2014.

MILC compensates enrolled dairy producers when the Boston Class I milk price falls below \$16.94 per hundredweight (cwt), after adjustment for the cost of dairy feed rations. MILC payments are calculated each month using the latest milk price and feed cost, just as in the 2008 Farm Bill. The payment rate for October 2013 through February 2014 marketing's is zero. Payment rates during the months after January 2014 until the termination of the MILC program will be determined as the appropriate data becomes available.

Producers who want to select a different production start month must visit their local FSA office between April 14, 2014, and May 30, 2014.

FSA will provide producers with information on program requirements, updates and sign ups as the information becomes available.

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## New Farm Bill Provides Permanent Livestock Disaster Assistance Programs

The 2014 Farm Bill, formally known as the Agricultural Act of 2014, makes the Livestock Forage Program (LFP) and Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) permanent programs and provides retroactive authority to cover eligible losses back to Oct. 1, 2011.

LFP provides compensation to eligible producers who suffered grazing losses due to drought and fire. LIP provides compensation to livestock producers who 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, including wolves and avian predators.

USDA is determined to make implementing the livestock disaster programs a top priority; sign-up began on April 15, 2014.

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
- Costs of transporting livestock to safer grounds or to move animals to new pastures
- Feed purchases if supplies or grazing pastures are destroyed
- Crop records, including seed and fertilizer purchases, planting and production records

Program Fact Sheets can be obtained by clicking on the following link: [LIP, LFP, and ELAP Fact Sheets](#). Thanks for your patience as USDA works diligently to put Farm Bill programs into action to benefit the farmers and ranchers of rural America.

To expedite applications, all producers who experienced losses are encouraged to **collect records** documenting these losses in preparation for the enrollment into these disaster assistance programs. Information on the types of records necessary can be provided by local FSA county offices. Producers also are encouraged to contact their county office ahead of time to schedule an appointment.

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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 loan term limits 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 payments 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 guarantee amount on Conservation Loans from 75 to 80 percent and 90 percent for socially disadvantaged borrowers and beginning farmers.
- Microloans will not count toward 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.

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## USDA Sets Date For Soybean Request For Referendum (AO-1595)

USDA will offer soybean producers the opportunity to request a referendum on the Soybean Promotion and Research Order (Order), as authorized under the Soybean Promotion, Research, and Consumer Information Act (Act).

Soybean producers who are interested in having a referendum to determine whether to continue the Soybean Checkoff Program are invited to participate. To be eligible to participate, producers must certify and provide documentation that shows that they produced soybeans and paid an assessment on the soybeans during the period of Jan. 1, 2012, through Dec. 31, 2013.

Producers may obtain a form by mail, fax, or in person from FSA county offices starting on May 5, 2014 through May 30, 2014. Forms are also available on the [AMS website](#). Producers who don't participate in FSA programs can still request a referendum at the FSA county office where they own or rent land.

Completed forms and supporting documentation must be returned to the appropriate FSA county office by fax or in person no later than close of business May 30, 2014. If returned by mail, it must be postmarked by midnight May 30, 2014, and received in the office by close of business on June 5, 2014.

Notice of the Request for Referendum will be published in the March 4, 2014, Federal Register. For more information, visit the [AMS website](#) or contact James Brow, Research and Promotions Branch; Livestock, Poultry and Seed Program, AMS, USDA; STOP 0251 - Room 2610-S; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, D.C. 20250-0251; tel. (202) 720-0633.

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## Beginning Farmer Loans

FSA assists beginning farmers to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:

- Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years
- Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm
- Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA
- Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's average size farm.

Additional program information, loan applications, and other materials are available at your local USDA Service Center. You may also visit [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

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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

**FSA's self-service assistance anytime, anywhere!**

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### Dates To Remember

**May 26** - Office closed in observance of Memorial Day

**May 30** - MILC Program Start Month Selection Relief Period Ends; Soybean Referendum Request Deadline

**May 31** - Final date to request 2013-crop feed grains, oilseeds loans or LDP

**June 20** - deadline to certify prevented planting corn

**June 30** - deadline to certify prevented planting soybeans

**July 15** - deadline to certify spring seeded grains, spring planted row crops, and Hops

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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).