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1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250
www.fsa.usda.gov

News Release

Contact:
Isabel Benemelis (202)720-7809

USDA Offers New Loans for Portable Farm Storage and Handling Equipment *Portable Equipment Can Help Producers, including Small-Scale and Local Farmers, Get Products to Market Quickly*

COLUMBUS, Ohio, May 2, 2016 – U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will provide a new financing option to help farmers purchase portable storage and handling equipment. Farm Service Agency (FSA) Administrator Val Dolcini and Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Administrator Elanor Starmer announced changes to the Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program today during a local and regional food roundtable in Columbus, Ohio. The loans, which now include a smaller microloan option with lower down payments, are designed to help producers, including new, small and mid-sized producers, grow their businesses and markets.

“As more communities reconnect with agriculture, consumer demand is increasing for food produced locally or regionally,” said Dolcini. “Portable handling and storage equipment is vital to helping farmers get their products to market more quickly and better maintain product quality, bringing them greater returns. That’s why we’ve added this type of equipment as a new category for our Farm Storage Facility Loan program.”

The program also offers a new “microloan” option, which allows applicants seeking less than \$50,000 to qualify for a reduced down payment of five percent and no requirement to provide three years of production history. Farms and ranches of all sizes are eligible. The microloan option is expected to be of particular benefit to smaller farms and ranches, and specialty crop producers who may not have access to commercial storage or on-farm storage after harvest. These producers can invest in equipment like conveyers, scales or refrigeration units and trucks that can store commodities before delivering them to markets. Producers do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply.

“Growing high-value crops for local and regional markets is a common entry point for new farmers,” said Starmer. “Since they often rent land and have to transport perishable commodities, a loan that can cover mobile coolers or even refrigerated trucks fills an important gap. These producers in turn supply the growing number of food hubs, farmers markets or stores and restaurants interested in sourcing local food.”

Earlier this year, FSA significantly expanded the list of commodities eligible for Farm Storage Facility Loan. Eligible commodities now include aquaculture; floriculture; fruits (including nuts) and vegetables; corn, grain sorghum, rice, oilseeds, oats, wheat, triticale, spelt, buckwheat, lentils, chickpeas, dry peas sugar, peanuts, barley, rye, hay, honey, hops, maple sap, unprocessed meat and poultry, eggs, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt and renewable biomass. FSFL microloans can also be used to finance wash and pack equipment used post-harvest, before a commodity is placed in cold storage.

AMS helps thousands of agricultural food producers and businesses enhance their marketing efforts through a combination of research, technical services and grants. The agency works to improve marketing opportunities for U.S. growers and producers, including those involved in specialty crop production and in the local and regional food systems. Visit www.ams.usda.gov to learn more about AMS services.

Today's announcement will further advance the efforts of USDA's [Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food](#) initiative, which coordinates the Department's work to develop local and regional food systems. USDA is committed to helping farmers, ranchers, and businesses access the growing market for local and regional foods, which was valued at \$12 billion in 2014 according to industry estimates. Under this Administration, USDA has invested more than \$1 billion in more than 40,000 local and regional food businesses and infrastructure projects. More information on how USDA investments are connecting producers with consumers and expanding rural economic opportunities is available in [Chapter IV of USDA Results on Medium](#).

To learn more about Farm Storage Facility Loans, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport or contact a local FSA county office. To find your local FSA county office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

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