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May 2017

# USDA e-News

## California Edition



**United States Department of Agriculture**

*Welcome to USDA e-News, California Edition, a multi-agency newsletter providing California's producers and other interested parties with current information.*

*In this issue:* [Featured Item](#) | [Updates](#) | [Funding Opportunities](#) | [Reports & Publications](#)  
[Other Activities & Events](#) | [About Us](#) | [Contact Us](#)

## **Featured Items**

### **Farmer Veteran Coalition to host “Empowering Women Veterans” Conference at Santa Rosa Calif.**

The NRCS along with other USDA agencies to showcase resources and present at Farmer Veteran Coalition “Empowering Women Veterans” Conference. On **May 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup>, at the Flamingo Resort and Spa in Santa Rosa, CA 95405**. The conference will provide; a beginning farmer track, established farmer track, employment and education opportunities, a farm visit and special guest speakers from the USDA. All transitioning service members, veterans, and farmers and ranchers are invited to attend and is open to the public at large. For further information contact Kristen Ford, Program Manager, Farmer Veteran Coalition at (530) 756-1395 or [Kristen@farmvetco.org](mailto:Kristen@farmvetco.org) and Victor M. Hernandez, Outreach Specialist & Sociologist at (530) 304-8614 or [victor.hernandez@ca.usda.gov](mailto:victor.hernandez@ca.usda.gov)

### **NRCS Calif. Modesto Service Center to host “Veteran Farmer Outreach Day” at Harvest Hall - first of 3 workshop series in Calif.**

The NRCS California team will host a 3 workshop series tailored to reach Transitioning Service Members and Veteran Farmers. 1<sup>st</sup> in Series to take place On **May 18<sup>th</sup>, from 9-3PM at the Modesto Harvest Hall located at 3800 Cornucopia Way, Modesto CA 95358**. The workshops will provide an opportunity for Entrepreneurs and small-scale business owners to learn about; conservation and sustainable farm practices, access to capital, and essential business tools and resources. All veterans, small business owners, farmers and ranchers are invited to attend and is open to the public at large. For further information contact Carmen Johnson, Veteran Special Emphasis Program Manager at (209) 491-9320 Ext: 112 or [carmen.johnson@ca.usda.gov](mailto:carmen.johnson@ca.usda.gov) and Victor M. Hernandez Outreach Specialist & Sociologist at (530) 304-8614 or [victor.hernandez@ca.usda.gov](mailto:victor.hernandez@ca.usda.gov)

## Updates

### **Sales Closing Date Nears for Crop Insurance Programs**

USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) reminds producers that the final dates to apply for crop insurance are fast approaching. **May 31, 2017**, is the last day to buy or change your policy for Potatoes. Producers need to purchase, review, or modify their crop insurance policies before these sales closing dates have passed. Crop insurance provides protection against crop production losses due to natural perils such as drought, hail, and excessive moisture. Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. In order to receive premium subsidies, the insured must certify that they meet [Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation](#) requirements (AD-1026) with Farm Service Agency (FSA). For more information contact your agent or you can find an agent online at the RMA [Agent Locator](#).

### **NRCS Application Deadline for 2017 EQIP Funding is Fast Approaching**

The application deadline for NRCS' final round of Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding is approaching fast—May 26<sup>th</sup>, just a month away. NRCS takes applications year round and bundles and ranks them for funding purposes three to five times per year. This is the final bundle planned for fiscal year 2017.

While applications for all conservation purposes are welcome, NRCS is currently working to spread awareness on [air quality opportunities](#) for which there is [considerable funding available](#). EQIP Air Quality funding can help replace older farm equipment engines with newer, cleaner ones. To date, we've helped replace more than 4,000 of these old units. The emissions-reduction benefit is similar to having removed more than 1 million cars off California's roads. This practice is [available in California's 35 counties](#) not in compliance with federal air quality standards.

Additional practices available statewide include: 1) Treat unpaved farm roads to limit dust; 2) Repower irrigation engines with cleaner options; 3) Adopt conservation tillage practices; 4) Combine and limit field passes; 5) Use smart sprayers in orchards; 6) Chip orchard/vineyard

removals; 7) Safely dispose of chemically-treated wooden stakes; and new in 2016-- 8) Use “low-dust” nut harvesters.

Interested farmers are encouraged to contact their local Service Center very soon to start the conservation planning process, and to apply for assistance.

## **Deadline Approaching for Conservation Compliance**

The deadline to have a signed Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation Certification (AD-1026) on file with FSA is **June 1, 2017**. This requirement applies to all producers seeking federal crop insurance premium subsidies for the 2018 reinsurance year (July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018.) **Producers who filed an exception certification last year must file a form AD-1026 with FSA by June 1, 2017 to maintain premium subsidies on your policy for 2018.** Producers without a signed AD-1026 on file can still purchase crop insurance, but they will no longer be eligible to receive the government paid premium subsidies. Additional information is available on the [Five Steps to Meet Conservation Compliance](#) website.

## **NRCS Invites Proposals for Conservation Innovation Grants**

USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in California is now accepting proposals for its Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program. Up to \$375,000 is available for one- to three-year grants. The maximum award amount for any project will not exceed \$75,000 in FY 2017. Proposals are due by June 7, 2017. In 2017 NRCS California is prioritizing proposals that improve the “technical toolbox” to address the following on-farm resource concerns: soil and water quality, wildlife habitat, water conservation, forest health, air quality, waste recycling and energy conservation. Applicants are encouraged to explore the full program announcement to better match their proposals to these needs. Please see [www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ca/programs/financial/cig/](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ca/programs/financial/cig/)

Funds will be awarded through a statewide competitive grants process and in 2017 will not include a pre-proposal process. Eligible applicants include state and local government, nongovernment organizations, Tribal governments, eligible private business and individuals. Applicants may contact Erik Beardsley at [Erik.Beardsley@ca.usda.gov](mailto:Erik.Beardsley@ca.usda.gov) for more information.

Applicants are encouraged to email applications to Erik Beardsley. Alternatively, they may be mailed or sent by overnight courier to Erik Beardsley, USDA-NRCS, CIG Program, 430 G Street #4164, Davis, CA 95616-4164. All applications must be received by 4:30 p.m. on June 7, 2017.

## **Southern California Farmers are Eligible for NRCS Air Quality Assistance**

Technical and financial assistance is available through USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to help farmers and ranchers in Southern California to make improvements in their operations that can lead to improved air quality. Assistance is made available through NRCS’s Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). EQIP applications are accepted year-round, but interested producers need to be ready by May 26, 2017, to be considered for this

year's funding. To be ready for EQIP funding consideration, interested applicants will need to submit the application form and meet program eligibility requirements. NRCS staff will work together by developing a conservation plan, which can lead towards approval of the 'EQIP schedule of operations.'

NRCS can help agricultural producers implement conservation practices that reduce air pollution from agricultural sources, including chipping orchard or vineyard debris, tillage management, repower in-use irrigation pump engines, and implementation of "low-dust" nut harvesters. These examples are available statewide for all qualifying producers. For fiscal year 2017, the approved counties for tractor and replacement in Southern California include: Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Mono, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, and Ventura.

Contact information for local NRCS service centers is available at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ca/contact/local/>.

## **USDA Issues Safety-Net Payments to the Farmers in Response to 2015 Market Downturn**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced many of the 1.7 million farms that enrolled in either the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs will receive safety-net payments due to market downturns during the 2015 crop year. This fall, USDA will be making more than \$7 billion in payments under the ARC-County and PLC programs to assist participating producers, which will account for over 10 percent of USDA's projected 2016 net farm income.

These payments will help provide reassurance to America's farm families, who are standing strong against low commodity prices compounded by unfavorable growing conditions in many parts of the country. Overall, 76 percent of participating farm base acres are enrolled in ARC-County, 23 percent in PLC and one percent in ARC-Individual. For other program information including frequently asked questions, visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc).

For more information, producers are encouraged to visit their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office. To find a local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

## **Funding Opportunities**

### **USDA-NRCS and CARCD announce 3<sup>rd</sup> Round grantees of Small Fund Program "Community Outreach Fund" formerly "Outreach Mini-Grants"**

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) announce 3<sup>rd</sup> round grantees of Small Fund Program "Outreach Mini Grants". NRCS California in partnership with CARCD have provided small community outreach fund opportunities for Ag Partners, Non-Profit Organizations and RCD's for resource conservation projects to historically underserved producers. Future fund cycles to be

announced with a maximum fund total of \$2,000.00. The funds may be used to supplement ongoing conservation outreach efforts and do not require a new project be developed. Congratulations to the following Resource Conservation District fund recipients: Monterey RCD, Grater San Diego RCD, Western Shasta RCD and Ventura RCD. For future fund details contact Kristen Murphy, Project Coordinator at [Kristen-murphy@carcd.org](mailto:Kristen-murphy@carcd.org) or 916-520-9404 and Victor M. Hernandez, Outreach Specialist and Sociologist at (530) 304-8614 or [victor.hernandez@ca.usda.gov](mailto:victor.hernandez@ca.usda.gov)

## **USDA Streamlined Guaranteed Loans and Additional Lender Category for Small-Scale Operators**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced recently the availability of a streamlined version of USDA guaranteed loans, which are tailored for smaller scale farms and urban producers. The program, called EZ Guarantee Loans, uses a simplified application process to help beginning, small, underserved and family farmers and ranchers apply for loans of up to \$100,000 from USDA-approved lenders to purchase farmland or finance agricultural operations.

USDA unveiled a new category of lenders that will join traditional lenders, such as banks and credit unions, in offering USDA EZ Guarantee Loans. Microlenders, which include Community Development Financial Institutions and Rural Rehabilitation Corporations, will be able to offer their customers up to \$50,000 of EZ Guaranteed Loans, helping to reach urban areas and underserved producers. Banks, credit unions and other traditional USDA-approved lenders, can offer customers up to \$100,000 to help with agricultural operation costs.

EZ Guarantee Loans offer low interest rates and terms up to seven years for financing operating expenses and 40 years for financing the purchase of farm real estate. USDA-approved lenders can issue these loans with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) guaranteeing the loan up to 95 percent.

More than half of all FSA loans go to new farmers and more than a quarter to underserved borrowers. FSA also offers loans of up to \$5,000 to young farmers and ranchers through the Youth Loan Program. Loans are made to eligible youth to finance agricultural projects, with almost 9,000 young people now participating. More information about the available types of FSA farm loans can be found at [www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans) or by contacting your local FSA office. To find your nearest office location, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

## **\$8 Million Fund Created to Improve Water Quality and Conserve Greater Sage-Grouse in the Eastern Sierra**

The USDA's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) has created an \$8 million fund to support initiatives conserving the Bi-State population of greater sage-grouse and enhancing ranch water quality in the region. The \$8 million fund will be available for five years to landowners in portions of Inyo, Mono, and Alpine Counties of California and portions of Douglas, Lyon, Carson City, Mineral, and Esmeralda Counties in Nevada. Ranchers can apply to receive funds from this pool in order to complete projects that will enhance sage-grouse habitat and improve water quality on property they own and manage. Any landowner interested in

pursuing a project that will benefit the goals of the RCPP is encouraged to contact Susanna Danner, ESLT Land Conservation Program Director, at (760) 873-4554 or [susanna@eslt.org](mailto:susanna@eslt.org).

## **Reports and Publications**

### **NASS Reports**

[Crop Production](#) (05/10/17)

[Almond Subjective Forecast](#) (05/10/17)

[Raisin Grape Overhead Trellis](#) (05/10/17)

[Processing Tomato](#) (05/19/17)

[Olive Inventory](#) (05/23/17)

## **Other Activities and Events**

### **NRCS California Offers Post-Flood Assistance; Assessments Underway**

In the wake of recent California flooding, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in California is meeting with landowners and other agencies to assess damages and offer technical and financial assistance where possible. Assistance programs through NRCS include the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

#### **Watershed Assistance**

The program requires local government bodies or others to sponsor on-the-ground work including concrete barriers and streambank protection, mulching, and other damage control measures. Potential sponsors seeking assistance should do so through their local USDA service center <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=CA>.

#### **Landowner Technical Assistance**

NRCS may also be able to provide technical and educational assistance to landowners faced with erosion and flooding in a damaged watershed. Agency conservationists have expertise in erosion, drainage and the use of measures (such as sand bags, mulching etc.) to mitigate damage to the landscape.

#### **Farmer/Rancher Assistance**

EQIP can provide long-term support to repair erosion on agricultural lands such as gullies, streams, or hillsides. NRCS takes applications on an ongoing basis throughout the year and encourage interested landowners to contact their local offices for more information. For more information on available NRCS assistance, contact your local field office or visit [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov).

## **Certified Organic Survey for 2016 Data Collection Now Through Early May**

NASS is now conducting the 2016 Certified Organic Survey to gather additional data on acreage, production, and sales for certified organic crops and livestock. Your response is critical to help inform program and policy decisions, such as developing more accurate organic crop insurance coverage provided by USDA's Risk Management Agency. You may respond online at [www.agcounts.usda.gov](http://www.agcounts.usda.gov) or by mail. The results of this survey will be available in aggregate form only, ensuring that no individual operation or producer can be identified as required by federal law. If you have additional questions, contact Juan Albelo at [Juan.Albelo@nass.usda.gov](mailto:Juan.Albelo@nass.usda.gov) or 916-498-5161. To learn more, visit [www.nass.usda.gov](http://www.nass.usda.gov).

## **How Much Does It Cost to Rent Cropland? Find Out with the Cash Rents Survey**

The Cash Rents Survey provides the basis for county estimates of the cash rent paid for irrigated cropland, non-irrigated cropland, and pasture. NASS mailed the Cash Rents survey in February and will continue to collect data until July. The results of this survey will be available online in August. If you have additional questions, contact Roberto Sanchez at [Roberto.Sanchez@nass.usda.gov](mailto:Roberto.Sanchez@nass.usda.gov) or 916-498-5161. To learn more, visit [www.nass.usda.gov](http://www.nass.usda.gov).

## **June Hogs Survey Starts Late May**

The agency will survey pork producers for detailed information on market hog and breeding stock inventories as well as pig crop and farrowing intentions. NASS will mail the questionnaires to all producers selected for the survey in late May. To ensure all survey participants have an opportunity to respond, NASS interviewers will contact producers who do not respond by mail or online to conduct telephone and personal interviews. NASS will publish the survey results in the *Quarterly Hogs and Pigs* report on June 29. To learn more, contact Riccio Buggs at [Riccio.Buggs@nass.usda.gov](mailto:Riccio.Buggs@nass.usda.gov) or 916-498-5161.

## **Questions about a survey from USDA NASS?**

Call NASS at 1-800-851-1127 or email [nassrfopcr@nass.usda.gov](mailto:nassrfopcr@nass.usda.gov).

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- [Census of Agriculture](#)
- [Agriculture Surveys](#)

#### Risk Management Agency (RMA)

- [Crop Insurance Programs](#)
- [Funding Opportunities](#)

#### Rural Development (RD)

- [Overview of Programs](#)

## **Contact Us**

If you would like to receive a copy of future newsletters or if you have relevant information for California producers that you want to include in a future issue of this newsletter, please email one of the contacts listed below. Please be advised that not all activities may be published.

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