

# Farm Service Agency & NRCS News

## Enrollment for New Dairy Farm Risk Management Program to Begin Sept. 2

### *USDA Launches New Web Tool to Help Producers Manage Unforeseen Economic Challenges*

Starting Sept. 2, 2014, farmers can enroll in the new dairy Margin Protection Program. The voluntary program, established by the 2014 Farm Bill, provides financial assistance to participating farmers when the margin – the difference between the price of milk and feed costs – falls below the coverage level selected by the farmer.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) also launched a new Web tool to help producers determine the level of coverage under the Margin Protection Program that will provide them with the strongest safety net under a variety of conditions. The online resource, available at [www.fsa.usda.gov/mpptool](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mpptool), allows dairy farmers to quickly and easily combine unique operation data and other key variables to calculate their coverage needs based on price projections.

The Margin Protection Program, which replaces the Milk Income Loss Contract program, gives participating dairy producers the flexibility to select coverage levels best suited for their operation. Enrollment begins Sept. 2 and ends on Nov. 28, 2014, for 2014 and 2015. Participating farmers must remain in the program through 2018 and pay a minimum \$100 administrative fee each year. Producers have the option of selecting a different coverage level during open enrollment each year.

Dairy operations enrolling in the new program must comply with conservation compliance provisions and cannot participate in the Livestock Gross Margin dairy insurance program. Farmers already participating in the Livestock Gross Margin program may register for the Margin Protection Program, but the new margin program will only begin once their Livestock Gross Margin coverage has ended.

The 2014 Farm Bill also established the Dairy Product Donation Program. The program authorizes USDA to purchase and donate dairy products to nonprofit organizations that provide nutrition assistance to low-income families. Purchases only occur during periods of low dairy margins. Dairy operators do not need to enroll to benefit from the Dairy Product Donation Program.

Wisconsin FSA urges all dairy producers to contact their dairy plants to get a summary of their 2011-2013 milk marketing's and make an appointment to provide that information to the local FSA office as soon as possible.

Visit FSA online at [www.fsa.usda.gov/factsheets](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/factsheets), or stop by a local FSA office to learn more about the Margin Protection Program.

## Environmental Quality Incentives Program deadline approaching

The application deadline for the 2015 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) will be October 3, 2014, in Wisconsin. Please do not hesitate to refer potential applicants to NRCS or to other natural resources professionals, such as foresters, grazing planners, Technical Service Providers, or other qualified individuals, so that plans may be finalized and an EQIP application submitted in advance of Oct 3.

The NRCS website includes updated information for the 2015 EQIP, as well as a link to Get Started with NRCS: 5 Steps to Assistance. You will find application forms and additional information at the EQIP website, found at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/> or by contacting the appropriate NRCS office for your farm. The Oconto NRCS office covers Marinette and Oconto Counties and can be reached at 920-834-2366. The Rhinelander NRCS office covers Forest, Florence, Oneida, and Vilas Counties and can be reached at 715-362-5941.

Wisconsin NRCS is prepared to screen applications, based upon where an applicant is in the planning process:

- High priority applicants will have a plan (i.e. a conservation plan or equivalent, such as a forest management plan, prescribed grazing plan, etc.) and will have obtained “all necessary permits, land rights, surveys, final designs, and inspections for structural practices prior to construction or implementation,” as of October 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- Medium priority applicants will have initiated the conservation planning process, with NRCS or another natural resource professional, such that natural resources problems/opportunities and the applicant's objectives are understood, to the point that planning alternatives have been or could soon be provided to the applicant, but final decisions have not been made. In other words, we (NRCS) know who the applicant is, what they want to do, and what they could do, but there is no plan, yet.
- Low priority applicants will be all others, including those who apply closer to Oct 3<sup>rd</sup>, leaving insufficient time to develop a plan.