

Time To Start Thinking About The Farm Bill

In late September, Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack, announced the availability of the ARC/PLC web-based decision tools. He further announced that farm owners could begin to update their yield history and reallocate base acres through their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office. In addition, the timeline for landowners and producers to make decisions regarding reallocating base acreage, updating program yields, ARC or PLC program election and program signup was announced.

ARC/PLC Timeline

- September 29, 2014 – February 27, 2015: Owners have a one-time opportunity to reallocate the farm's base acres or update yields.
- November 17, 2014 – March 31, 2015: Producers make election which will remain in effect for the 2014-2018 crop years, of the following: 1) PLC or ARC County on a covered commodity-by-commodity basis; or 2) ARC Individual for all covered commodities on the farm.
- Mid-April 2015 – Summer 2015: Producers sign contracts to participate in ARC/PLC for 2014 and 2015 crop years.

Farm Bill Decision Tools

Two national farm bill decision aids have been developed with links posted on FSA's ARC/PLC program website. The decision aids are a result of two groups being awarded \$1.5 million grants to develop the web-based tools. The National Association of Agricultural and Food Policy (NAAFP), led by the Agricultural and Food Policy Center (AFPC) at Texas A&M University and the Agricultural Policy Research Institute (FAPRI) at the University of Missouri, developed ARC/PLC decision tools and the National Coalition for Producer Education (NCPE), led by the University of Illinois has also developed an ARC/PLC decision aid. The NCPE group has also developed the Dairy Margin Protection Program (MPP) decision aid. The new tools, along with background information, are now available at:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc>

The decision tools are not yet fully functional due to lack of county data needed to run the tools on all covered commodities in all counties. However, the tools appear to be working for major commodities and major counties. These tools are being evaluated to see how well they work for Southern states. These groups received access to confidential data and information from FSA as part of the grant agreement. Therefore, at this time these are the **primary** decision tools that will be used in education programs.

The NAAFP decision aid led by Texas A&M requires you to register your email and will save the data you enter. **County Extension faculty are encouraged to select multi-client user when creating an account, especially if you will be using it for educational purposes.**



Base Reallocation and Yield Update

The web decision tools handle base and yield decisions. Spreadsheet base reallocation and yield update calculators are available from FSA and the National Center for Peanut Competitiveness. A simple base reallocation spreadsheet from USDA Farm Service Agency that uses farm serial number is posted at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc>.

To handle farms with multiple tracts, The National Center for Peanut Competitiveness Base Reallocation and Yield Update Calculator is setup to allow a farmer to enter acres and yields by tract. Instructions and the spreadsheet can be downloaded at:

http://www.gapeanuts.com/growerinfo/2014_ncpc_calculatorinstructions.pdf

[Download the Preliminary Base Acreage and Payment Yields Decision Calculator.](#)

You can give landowners and producers the above links as a resource to start looking at their decisions. Four states, Alabama, Florida, Georgia and South Carolina, will partner to provide training for county Extension agents on ARC/PLC program decisions and the ARC/PLC webtools. Dates and locations are forthcoming.

Extension in each state will be working with the Farm Service Agency and other cooperators and supporters on statewide meetings for landowners and producers. Producers need to be made aware of the timelines and where they can get access to the decision tools. **Landowners and producers have time to analyze their decisions based on the timelines announced.** Producers who use the decision tools also need to gather crop production history, including crop insurance records, going back to at least 2008 or ten years if possible.

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