



ARC and PLC Recommendations for 2026

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Enrollment for commodity support programs ARC and PLC is now open, delayed from its usual March 15th deadline so the USDA could add base acres. Farmers have until December 11, 2026 to make commodity program decisions for their 2026 base acres, later than is typically the case. As a result, farmers will make their ARC and PLC election with more market and yield information than usual. For the 2027 crop, the March 15th deadline will be in place.

I recommend that for 2026 farmers choose county ARC (ARC-CO) for corn, soybean and oat base acres and PLC for wheat base acres. I recommend ARC-CO for barley, sunflower seed, and sorghum base acres. Unlike other years, previous elections do not transfer automatically, so farmers must make their election for 2026. Besides the in-person option, contact your county office for alternative ways to file, including online. If you enroll now, you can update your election if market conditions shift, as long as the updated forms are completed before the December 11th deadline. **A key change for 2026 is that farmers can choose county ARC and purchase the Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO) for insured crop acres.**

The table below reports effective reference prices for 2026 for the crops with major base acres in Wisconsin. They have increased noticeably from 2025 because recent legislation updated the formula. The table also shows the 2026 projected marketing-year average farm price from the USDA's October 9th WASDE report. USDA updates these projections monthly, with reports scheduled for November 10 and December 10. Lastly, the table shows the ARC "Trigger" price – the price needed to trigger ARC-CO payments if a county has an average (benchmark) yield.

Crop	2026 Effective Reference Price	2026 Projected Farm Price on Oct 9	2026 ARC "Trigger" Price
Corn	\$4.42	\$4.70	\$4.53
Soybeans	\$10.71	\$12.00	\$10.95
Wheat	\$6.35	\$6.30	\$6.28
Oats	\$3.05	\$3.35	\$3.55
Barley	\$5.58	\$5.70	\$5.79
Sunflower Seed	\$23.75	\$24.70	\$22.61
Sorghum	\$4.67	\$4.50	\$4.77

Logic for 2026 Recommendations. For corn and soybeans, projected prices far exceed effective reference prices, implying that PLC payments are unlikely, while ARC trigger prices also exceed effective reference prices, implying that ARC payments are also unlikely. But if prices decline unexpectedly, or county yields are low, ARC payments will be more likely and larger than PLC payments. Thus, I recommend that Wisconsin farmers choose county ARC (ARC-CO) for corn and soybeans for 2026.

For wheat, the effective reference price is 5 cents above the projected price, implying that PLC payments are expected, but the ARC trigger is 12 cents below the projected price, implying that ARC payments are not expected. In September, the USDA projected the Wisconsin state-average wheat yield as 83 bu/ac, which will be the highest in state history. Based on this, the likelihood of below average yields in most counties is less than usual, so that the price would have to fall even further below the ARC trigger before ARC payments would be triggered. As a result, I recommend that Wisconsin farmers choose PLC for wheat for 2026.

For oats, the projected price is 30 cents above effective reference price, implying that PLC payments are unlikely, while the ARC trigger price is 20 cents above the projected price, so that even with average county yields, ARC payments are likely in many counties. However, note that USDA projected the Wisconsin state-average yield for oats as 74 bu/ac, which is tied for the highest in state history, suggesting that ARC payments for oats may not occur in many counties due to high yields, though still more likely and larger than for PLC. As a result, I recommend that Wisconsin farmers choose county ARC (ARC-CO) for oats for 2026.

For barley, the projected price is 12 cents above effective reference price, implying that PLC payments are unlikely, but the ARC trigger price is 9 cents above the projected price, so that even with average county yields, ARC payments are likely in many counties. As a result, I recommend that Wisconsin farmers choose county ARC (ARC-CO) for barley for 2026.

For sunflower seeds, the projected price is almost \$1/cwt above the effective reference price and more than \$2/cwt above the ARC trigger, suggesting that payments are unlikely for both programs. But the USDA FSA yield data used to construct ARC county guarantees show little variation between counties for yields, so many counties have the same guarantee. At the projected price, a county yield below 1807 lbs/ac would trigger ARC payment (an 8.5% decline from the benchmark), which has happened twice in Wisconsin in the last five years, implying that ARC payments are more likely than PLC payments. Thus, I recommend that Wisconsin farmers choose county ARC (ARC-CO) for sunflower seeds for 2026.

For sorghum, the projected price is 17 cents below the effective reference price and 27 cents below the ARC trigger price, implying that both ARC and PLC payments are likely. However, because the ARC trigger is higher, ARC payments are more likely and likely to be larger than PLC payments, and so I recommend that Wisconsin farmers choose county ARC (ARC-CO) for sorghum for 2026.

The USDA updates WASDE monthly, with projected crop prices for 2026 scheduled for release on November 10 and December 10. If projected prices change substantially because of changing market conditions or policies, I will update my recommendations, but I do not anticipate making changes. Regardless, farmers have until December 11 to change their program elections.

My ARC PLC Resources Page <https://aae.wisc.edu/pdmitchell/extension/arc-plc-signup/> has more resources for farmers, including videos explaining the logic for my recommendations and data on prices and county yields.