

March 2013



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Los Angeles-Orange-San Bernardino County FSA Updates

DEAR PRODUCERS: Welcome to the new GovDelivery bulletins and updates service from the Los Angeles-Orange-San Bernardino County FSA office. Note that you are welcome to request to receive bulletins from more than one state and/or county and can add or remove individual subscriptions at any time.

Los Angeles-Orange-San Bernardino County FSA Office 45th CRP General Sign-up

Office Address:

44811 N. Date Ave., Suite B
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Website: www.fsa.usda.gov

County Executive Director:
Doug Brand

Program Technician:
Marilynn Wells

County Committee:
Paul Johnson
Dan Manassero
Bennie Moore, Jr.
Patricia Van Dam

Advisor:
Basilio Dorado

Office Hours:
8:00 am - 4:30 pm

USDA will conduct a four-week general sign-up for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), beginning May 20th and ending on June 14th. CRP protects the nation's natural resources through voluntary participation, while providing significant economic and environmental benefits to rural communities across the United States.

Currently, about 27 million acres are enrolled in CRP. Producers that are accepted in the sign-up can receive cost-share assistance to plant long-term, resource-conserving covers and receive an annual rental payment for the length of the contract (10-15 years).

Contracts on 3.3 million acres of CRP are set to expire on Sept. 30, 2013. Producers with expiring contracts or producers with environmentally sensitive land are encouraged to evaluate their options under CRP.

For more information on CRP and other FSA programs, visit a local FSA service center or www.fsa.usda.gov.

DCP/ACRE Program Sign-up Continues

DCP and ACRE signups for the 2013 crops are on-going. The DCP sign-up period will end on Aug. 2, 2013; and the ACRE sign-up period will end on June 3, 2013.

The 2013 DCP and ACRE program provisions are unchanged from 2012, except that all eligible participants in 2013 may choose to enroll in either DCP or ACRE for the 2013 crop year. This means that eligible producers who were enrolled in ACRE in 2012 may elect to enroll in DCP in 2013 or

Monday through Friday

may re-enroll in ACRE in 2013. Likewise producers who were enrolled in DCP may opt for ACRE enrollment.

Contact your County FSA Office for additional information.

Microloan Program

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) developed the Microloan (ML) program to better serve the unique financial operating needs of beginning, niche and small family farm operations.

FSA offers applicants a Microloan designed to help farmers with credit needs of \$35,000 or less. The loan features a streamlined application process built to fit the needs of new and smaller producers. This loan program will also be useful to specialty crop producers and operators of community supported agriculture (CSA).

Eligible applicants can apply for a maximum amount of \$35,000 to pay for initial start-up expenses such as hoop houses to extend the growing season, essential tools, irrigation and annual expenses such as seed, fertilizer, utilities, land rents, marketing, and distribution expenses. As financing needs increase, applicants can apply for a regular operating loan up to the maximum amount of \$300,000 or obtain financing from a commercial lender under FSA's Guaranteed Loan Program.

Individuals interested in applying for a microloan or who would like to discuss other farm loan programs available, should contact Tom Hunton, Farm Loan Officer, in the Kern County FSA office to setup an appointment. His phone number is (661) 336-0967 ext. 116.

MILC Program Extension

Dairy producers enrolled in the Milk Income Loss Contract program (MILC) will have their contracts automatically extended through Sept. 30, 2013. There is no need to re-enroll in the program. The MILC program was part of several FSA-related programs that were continued with the extension of the 2008 Farm Bill.

The production start month previously selected by an operation is applicable for FY 2013. Starting March 1, 2013, all production start month changes must be made according to normal start month selection provisions.

Normal start month provisions: Changes must be made on or before the 14th day of the month before the selected MILC production start month, except as otherwise provided during the applicable sign-up phase. A dairy operation cannot select a MILC production start month for any month that has already begun, except as otherwise provided; has already ended or; milk was not produced by the dairy operation.

Please call our FSA office and make an appointment if you decide to make changes.

Hispanic and Women Farmers and Ranchers Claim Period Ends March 25th

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack reminds Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers who allege discrimination by the USDA in past decades that the filing period will close March 25, 2013.

USDA urges potential claimants to contact the Claims Administrator for information and mail their claim packages on or before March 25, 2013.

The process offers a voluntary alternative to litigation for each Hispanic or female farmer and rancher who can prove that USDA denied his or her application for loan or loan servicing assistance for discriminatory reasons for certain time periods between 1981 and 2000. As announced in February 2011, the voluntary claims process will make available at least \$1.33 billion for cash awards and tax relief payments, plus up to \$160 million in farm debt relief, to eligible Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers. There are no filing fees to participate in the program.

Claimants may register for a claims package by calling the telephone number below Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern Time or by downloading the forms from the website.

Website: www.farmerclaims.gov

Phone: 1-888-508-4429

Claims Period: September 24, 2012 - March 25, 2013.

Independent legal services companies will administer the claims process and adjudicate the claims. Although there are no filing fees to participate and a lawyer is not required to participate in the claims process, persons seeking legal advice may contact a lawyer or other legal services provider.

Honey Loans Available

Honey loans are a type of marketing assistance loan and they are available until April 1, 2013. The national loan rate for honey is \$.69 per pound. Market prices currently exceed the loan rate, so LDPs are not available at this time.

To be eligible for a loan, the producer must have produced honey in the United States during the calendar year for which the loan is requested, and extracted the honey on or before Dec. 31 of the applicable crop year; have continuous beneficial interest in the honey through date of repayment of the loan; and been responsible for the financial risk of keeping. Producers are responsible for maintaining the quality of farm-stored honey during the term of the loan.

The containers must be marked with the producer's name, type of honey, number of container and net weight. Pre-loan inspections are required before the loans can be disbursed.

Honey used as collateral may not be disposed of without approval of the county office staff.

Farm Loans Available for Socially Disadvantaged

FSA has a number of loan programs available to assist applicants to begin or continue in agriculture production. Loans are available for operating or help purchase or improve farms or ranches.

While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, the FSA has provided priority funding for socially disadvantaged applicants.

A socially disadvantaged applicant is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of his or her identity as members of a group.

FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere.

Beginning and Limited Resource Farmers

FSA assists beginning farmers and or members of socially disadvantaged groups to finance agricultural

enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:

- * Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years
- * Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm
- * Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA
- * Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's median size.

Additional program information, loan applications and other materials are available at your local USDA Service Center. You may visit www.fsa.usda.gov

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Stop 9410, Washington, DC 20250-9450, or call toll-free at (866) 632-9992 (English) or (800) 877-8339 (TDD) or (866) 377-8642 (English Federal-relay) or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish Federal-relay).