

May 2013



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Los Angeles-Orange-San Bernardino County FSA Updates

Los Angeles-Orange-San Bernardino County FSA Office

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Paul Johnson - Chairman
Patricia Van Dam - Vice Chair
Dan Manassero - Member
Bennie Moore, Jr. - Member

Advisor:

Basilio Dorado

Farm Loan Officer:

Tom Hunton
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Farm Loan Technician:

Elsa Mora
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Office Hours:

8:00 am - 4:30 pm

CRP Sign-Up Starts May 20th

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) will conduct a four-week general sign-up for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), beginning May 20, 2013 and ending on June 14, 2013. 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 program can receive cost-share assistance to plant long-term, resource-conserving covers and receive an annual rental payment for the length of the contract which is 10-15 years.

Contracts on 3.3 million acres of CRP are set to expire on September 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 Programs Sign-Up Continues

The sign-up period for DCP and ACRE programs are still open. Producers are encouraged to sign up for DCP before the August 2, 2013, deadline. The deadline for sign up is even earlier for ACRE, 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 may re-enroll in ACRE in 2013. Likewise producers who were enrolled in DCP may opt for ACRE enrollment.

Contact your local County FSA Office for more information about DCP/Acre Programs or to make an appointment to enroll.

Monday through Friday

2013 County FSA Committee Elections

The election of agricultural producers to the Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees is important to all farmers and ranchers, whether beginning or long-established, large or small operation. It is crucial that every eligible producer participate in these elections because FSA county committees are a link between the agricultural community and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

County Committee (COC) members are a critical component of FSA operations. The intent is to have the COC reflect the makeup of the producers and represent all constituents. This means wherever possible, minorities, women or lower income producers need to be on the committee to speak for these underrepresented groups.

County committees provide local input on:

- Commodity price support loans and payments
- Conservation programs
- Incentive, indemnity and disaster payments for some commodities
- Emergency programs
- Payment eligibility.

FSA county committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws and members apply their judgment and knowledge to make local decisions.

Election Period

June 17, 2013 – The nomination period begins.

Aug. 1, 2013 – This is the last day to file nomination forms (FSA-669A) at the local USDA Service Center.

Nov. 4, 2013 – Ballots mailed to eligible voters.

Dec. 2, 2013 – Last day to return completed ballots to the USDA Service Center.

Jan. 1, 2014 – Newly elected county committee members take office.

Who Can Hold Office

To hold office as a county committee member, a person must meet the basic eligibility criteria:

- Participate or cooperate in a program administered by FSA
- Be eligible to vote in a county committee election
- Reside in the local administrative area (LAA) in which the person is a candidate.

Not have been:

- Removed or disqualified from the office of county committee member, alternate or employee
- Removed for cause from any public office or have been convicted of fraud, larceny, embezzlement or any other felony
- Dishonorably discharged from any branch of the armed services.

Nominations

To become a nominee, eligible individuals must sign nomination form FSA-669A. The form includes a statement that the nominee agrees to serve if elected. This form is available at USDA Service Centers and online.

Individuals may nominate themselves or others as a candidate. Additionally, organizations representing minority and women farmers or ranchers may nominate candidates. Nomination forms are filed for the county committee of the office that administers a producer's farm records.

Who Can Vote

Agricultural producers of legal voting age may be eligible to vote if they participate or cooperate in any FSA program. A person who is not of legal voting age but supervises and conducts the farming operations of an entire farm also may be eligible to vote. More information about voting eligibility requirements can be found in the FSA fact sheet titled "FSA County Committee Election – Eligibility to Vote and Hold Office as a County Committee Member." Producers may contact their local USDA Service Center for more 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.

Guaranteed Loan Program

The Farm Service Agency loan limit for the Guaranteed Loan Program has increased to \$1,302,000. The limit is adjusted annually based on data compiled by the National Agricultural Statistics Service. The lending limit increases every year according to an inflation index. The maximum combined guaranteed and direct farm loan indebtedness has increased to \$1,602,000.

As a reminder, the one-time loan origination fee charged on FSA guaranteed farm ownership and operating loans is 1.5 percent of the guaranteed portion of the loan.

Individuals interested in applying for a Guaranteed Loan Program, should contact Tom Hunton, Farm Loan Officer, in the Kern County FSA office to setup an appointment. His phone number is (661) 336-0967.

Rural Youth Loans

The Farm Service Agency makes loans to rural youths to establish and operate income-producing projects in connection with 4-H Clubs, FFA and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is \$5000.

Individuals interested in applying for a Rural Youth Loan 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.

Farm Record Changes

Remember to provide all changes to your farm records to the local FSA office for the current crop year. If you are changing your operation entity type, adding or dropping cropland or farms, or adding entities to your operation, contact the FSA county office to update your file.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).