



Stanislaus - Tuolumne County News

**Stanislaus - Tuolumne
USDA Service Center**
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Modesto, CA 95358
209-491-9320 (phone)
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www.fsa.usda.gov/ca

Hours
Monday - Friday
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

County Committee
Dave Santos, Chairman
Kurt Erickson, Vice Chair
Dave Wheeler, Member
Bob Brennan, Member
Polo Ramos, Advisor
Tina Nunes, Advisor

Next County Committee
meeting: August 7, 2008

Farm Program Staff
Jonna Spaletta, CED
Maria Juarez, PT
Carmen Cardenas, PT
Ulises Gonzales, PT

Farm Loan Staff
Suzie Wilson, State Specialist
John Oosterman, FLM
Joe Enos, FLO
Betty Sheppard, FLO
Alma Jaquez, PT
Lupe Mims, PT



NOTICE: 2008 Disaster Programs Requires Crop Insurance or NAP

Eligibility "Buy-In" Deadline is **September 16, 2008**

The recently-enacted Farm Bill legislates 2008 disaster programs covering losses to crops, trees/vines/bushes, forage, and other losses due to adverse weather. These programs require the crops you planted, grew, produced or were prevented from planting to have been covered by federal crop insurance or FSA's Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP). *All* of your crops on *all* of your acreage must be covered, not only those acres that suffered losses.

Due to the late passage of the Farm Bill in May, you will be given an opportunity to "buy-in" to the disaster program by paying a \$100/crop catastrophic crop insurance or NAP service fee for any 2008 crops that are not already covered by crop insurance or NAP.

This eligibility "buy-in" must be completed by **September 16, 2008** at your FSA Office to satisfy the requirement for total CI / NAP coverage. Note that it does not provide you with crop insurance indemnities or NAP benefits. Once this requirement is met, you may be eligible for one or more of the following programs:

- **Supplemental Revenue Program (SURE):** Covers crop revenue losses from quantity or quality deficiencies in disaster declared counties, contiguous counties, or in cases where the overall production loss exceeds 50%
- **Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP):** Compensates livestock owners for forage losses due to drought. Additionally, losses due to wildfire will be covered on public lands.
- **Tree Assistance Program (TAP):** Provides for partial reimbursement for replanting, salvage, pruning, debris removal and land preparation for orchardists and nursery tree growers if losses exceed 15%.
- **Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish (EALHF):** Emergency relief to producers of livestock (including horses), honey bees, and farm-raised fish. Covers losses from disasters such as adverse weather or other conditions, such as blizzards and wildfires not adequately covered by any other disaster program. This program is authorized at the discretion of the Secretary.

Another disaster program authorized by the Farm Bill is the **Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)** for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality. This is the only disaster program that does not require crop insurance or NAP coverage.

Further details of all of these disaster programs, including signup information, will be provided at a later date. Note that additional requirements exist for disaster programs eligibility.

Bottom Line: To be eligible for Disaster Programs in 2008, you must pay the fees for the eligibility buy-in at your FSA Office by **September 16, 2008.** Contact your FSA Office for more information.



Sign Up Underway for the 2008 DCP

Producers have until September 30, 2008 to sign up for the 2008 Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program (DCP). Producers should have received a postcard from the County office with an appointment date and time; **If for any reason you cannot attend the appointment, please contact the FSA office to reschedule your appointment.**

FSA computes DCP payments using base acres and payment yields established for each farm. Eligible producers receive direct payments at rates established by statute regardless of market prices. For 2008, eligible producers may request to receive an advance payment of 22 percent of the direct payment for each commodity associated with the farm. FSA will issue advance direct payments as soon as practical after enrollment. Final direct payments will be issued after Oct. 1, 2008. Counter-cyclical payments vary depending on market prices, and are issued only when the effective price for a commodity is below its target price (which takes into account the direct payment rate, market price and loan rate).

FSA COC Nomination Deadline

County committees play a crucial role in helping county office staff implement the 2008 Farm Bill. Due to the importance of county committee members and their roles, producers are encouraged to participate in the 2008 FSA county committee election process by **nominating an eligible candidate by the August 1st deadline.**

To become a nominee, eligible individuals must sign form FSA-669A. The form and other valuable information about FSA county committee elections are available at the County office and online at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>; click on News & Events, then County Committee Elections. Nomination forms for the 2008 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA Service Center by close of business on August 1, 2008.

FSA county committee members make decisions on disaster and conservation programs, emergency programs, commodity price support loan programs and other important agricultural issues. Members serve three-year terms. Nationwide, there are more than 7,800 farmers and ranchers serving on FSA county committees. Committees consist of 3 to 5 members who are elected by local producers.

FSA will mail ballots to producers beginning Nov 3. The voted ballots are due back at the local county office either via mail or in person by Dec 1, 2008. Newly elected committee/alternate members take office Jan 1, 2009.

2005-2007 Quality Loss Crop Disaster Signup

Signup for quality losses under the Crop Disaster Program (CDP) opened June 23, 2008. **During this time, the County office asks that producers be patient as we try to juggle multiple programs; we hope to focus on Quality CDP sign-ups in mid August; there is not currently a deadline for CDP sign-ups. Those producers who filed a Quantity CDP application will be notified via letter of the requirements to apply for Quality CDP.**

The CDP provides benefits to farmers who suffered losses to their 2005-2007 crops from natural disasters and related conditions. Producers who incurred qualifying quantity or quality losses in 2005, 2006 or 2007 may receive benefits for only one of these years. However, producers may apply for benefits for losses to multiple crops as long as the losses occurred in the same crop year.

Only producers who obtained crop insurance coverage or coverage under the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) for the year of loss will be eligible for CDP benefits. Producers must have suffered quality losses of at least 25 percent to be eligible for CDP Quality Loss. Producers may receive assistance for both quantity and quality losses. However, the total quantity and quality assistance, together with any crop insurance or NAP payment received for the same crop and the value of the crop production not lost, must not exceed 95 percent of the total value of the crop absent the disaster.

New Crop Certification Deadline

For 2008, the final crop reporting dates for most crops are being extended to August 15, 2008. Late fees will not be applied if acreage reports are filed **by August 15** and all other reporting requirements are met (**applicable to DCP participants**).

Filing an accurate and timely report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage, can prevent loss of benefits for a variety of Farm Service Agency programs.

Prevented Planting and/or Failed Acreage

For 2008, County Committee may accept requests for prevented planting and/or failed acreage, if timely filed by August 15. Farm visits will not be required if claims can be verified, and all other requirements are met.



Farm Reconstitutions

In Farm Service Agency terms, farms are **constituted** to group all tracts having the same owner and the same operator under one farm serial number. When changes in ownership or operation take place, a farm **reconstitution** is necessary.

The reconstitution—or recon—is the process of combining or dividing farms or tracts of land based on the farming operation. To be effective for the current year, recons must be requested by **August 1** for farms enrolled in the Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program. If 2008 DCP direct payments have already been issued on the farm, the reconstitution will be effective for 2009 unless the payments are refunded. Also reconstituted farms must re-enroll in the DCP **within 30 days**, but no later than **September 30, 2008**.

FSA Loans

The new Farm Bill provides increased limits on loans through FSA's Farm Loan Program. The maximum loan amount authorized for direct **Farm Ownership (FO)** loans and direct **Operating Loans (OL)** has been increased from \$200,000 to \$300,000.

In the FO program, the maximum loan term for the revised down payment program has been extended from 15 years to 20 years. Changes in the Down Payment Program mean the required down payment amount has been reduced from 10 percent to 5 percent and interest rates have been reduced to as low as 1.5% depending on the present FO interest rate. This program allows the agency to loan up to 45% of the purchase price with another lender providing 50% of the financing and the applicant contributing 5%.

FSA makes both direct and guaranteed farm ownership and operating loans to family-size farmers and ranchers who cannot obtain commercial credit from a bank, Farm Credit System institution or other lender. FSA loans can be used to purchase land, livestock, equipment, feed, seed and supplies. The loans can also be used to construct buildings or make farm improvements.

FSA also 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 \$5,000.

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 average size.

Each member of an entity must meet the eligibility requirements. Loan approval is not guaranteed.

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

FSA Signature Policy

Using the correct signature when doing business with FSA can save time and prevent a delay in program benefits. The following are FSA signature guidelines:

- Spouses shall not sign on behalf of each other as an authorized signatory for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations, or other similar entities
- All members of a general partnership must sign for the general partnership unless an individual is authorized to act on the behalf of the general partnership and bind all members
- Spouses may sign on behalf of each other's individual interest in a partnership, unless notification denying a spouse that authority is provided to the county office
- Acceptable signatures for general partnerships, joint ventures, corporations, estates, and trusts shall consist of an indicator "by" or "for" the individual's name, individual's name and capacity, or individual's name, capacity, and name of entity

For additional clarification on proper signatures contact your local FSA office.



New County Executive Director

Just wanted to briefly introduce myself... My name is Jonna Spaletta and I am your new County Executive Director for Stanislaus and Tuolumne Counties. I hail from Lodi, Ca and am the daughter of a farmer. After graduating from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo with a major in Agribusiness, I worked for Rabo AgriFinance for 2 ½ years underwriting agricultural loans and have now returned to FSA (I previously worked in the San Luis Obispo County FSA office for 2 years during college). Please feel free to come by and introduce yourself and/or express your comments/concerns as I am eager to meet the producers we serve!

Want Your Newsletter Via E-mail?

If you use a computer at home or in your farm or ranch operation, you may prefer to receive information via e-mail from your Farm Service Agency. Use the e-mail address below to share your e-mail address if you would like to be added to our e-mail list. We are exploring the option to send the county of-office newsletter and other information directly to your computer. To get on our list, send your e-mail address and full name, address and phone number to jonna.spaletta@ca.usda.gov Note that USDA will not share or sell your e-mail address. Also note that all county FSA newsletters are available at www.fsa.usda.gov/ca .

Dates to Remember	
July 18	LIP / LCP Deadline
August 1	County Committee Nomination Deadline
August 1	Reconstitution Deadline
August 15	2008 Acreage Reporting Deadline
Sept. 1	Labor Day- Office Closed
Sept. 16	Disaster Eligibility Buy-In Deadline for 2008
Sept. 30	DCP Deadline
Continues	CDP 2005-2007 Sign Ups
Continues	Continuous Conservation Reserve Program

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