

June / July 2010



Tulare County FSA News

Tulare County USDA Service Center

3530 W. Orchard Ct
Visalia, CA 93277
559-734-8732 Ext. 2 ph
559-732-2805 fax

Hours

Monday - Friday
8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

County Committee

Chairperson

Charlie Pitigliano, Jr.

Vice-Chairperson

Tom Gruber

Member

Mark Heuer

Advisor

Alex Garcia,

County Executive Director

Kaye Rydberg

Farm Loan Manager

Tom Roberts

County Office Staff

Becky Garcia, CPT
Theresa Barajas, PT
Slade Childers, FL PT
Pat Miller, FLO
Yvonne Newman, PT
Danielle Parreira, PT
Matt Scoville, PT
James Smith, PT
Kelly Solis, PT
Lorraine Wilson, PT

County Committee Elections FSA Counts on You

Since COC elections happen only once a year, here is an election refresher. For election purposes, counties are divided into local administrative areas, or LAAs. Each LAA selects one producer to serve a three-year term on the Farm Service Agency county committee.

Each year, an election is held in an LAA to replace the committee member whose three-year term is expiring. In counties with three LAAs, one seat is up for election. In combined counties in some years, two seats may be up for election.

Nominations

Candidate nominations for the FSA county committee election will be accepted June 15 through Aug. 2, 2010.

Producers who are residents in the LAA holding the election and who participate or cooperate in an FSA program and are of legal voting age may be nominated to serve on the county committee.

Individuals may nominate themselves or others as candidates. Also, organizations representing socially disadvantaged minorities and women farmers or ranchers may also nominate candidates.

The nomination form, FSA-669A, is available at the county office or may be downloaded from: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/elections>

To be valid, the nomination form must be signed by the person being nominated, indicating agreement to serve if elected. The completed nomination form must be returned to the county office by the close of business on Aug. 2, or postmarked by midnight Aug. 2, 2010.

Voting

Ballots will be mailed to eligible voters beginning Nov. 5, and must be returned to the county office by the close of business on Dec. 6, or postmarked by midnight Dec. 6, 2010.

Agricultural producers of legal voting age can 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 on an entire farm can also vote. No one can be denied the right to vote because of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation or marital or family status.

Candidate Eligibility

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 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 felony
- Dishonorably discharged from any branch of the armed services.

For additional clarification about county committee elections, contact your local county office staff. **LAA 2 is up for election this year in Tulare County.** LAA 2 includes the following cities: Exeter, Lemon Cove, Lindsay, Porterville, Springville, Strathmore, Three Rivers, Tulare, Woodlake and Woodville.



Tree Assistance Program Signup

Tree Assistance Program (TAP) signup for orchardists and nursery tree growers began Monday, May 10, 2010, at local Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices.

TAP provides help to orchardists and nursery tree growers who produce trees, bushes and vines for commercial purposes, to replant or rehabilitate trees, bushes and vines damaged or destroyed by natural disasters. The 2008 Farm Bill expanded eligibility to include Christmas tree and nursery tree growers that were ineligible under prior legislation. Trees grown for pulp or timber are not eligible.

To be eligible producers must have suffered more than a 15 percent death loss due to the natural disaster after adjustment for normal mortality. TAP is a cost-reimbursement program, with payments covering up to 70 percent of replant costs and 50 percent of pruning, removal and other salvaging costs for replacing or salvaging damaged trees.

Producers can receive assistance for up to 500 acres of trees, bushes or vines. Producers must also have purchased a policy or plan of insurance under the Federal Crop Insurance Act or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, or for 2008, obtained a waiver of the risk management purchase requirement through the buy-in provision. Eligible losses must have occurred on or after Jan. 1, 2008, and before Oct. 1, 2011.

For more information on the new TAP program, contact your county FSA office or the website at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>.

Crop Reporting

The annual requirement of reporting to the FSA office can be referred to as crop reporting, acreage reporting, or crop certification. 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. All cropland on the farm must be reported to receive benefits from the Direct and Counter-Cyclical program (DCP), Marketing assistance loans, Loan Deficiency Payments, Non-Insured Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), and the new crop disaster program Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE).

The deadline for reporting fall and spring seeded Barley, Oats and Wheat is April 30, 2010. The deadline for all other crops, including permanent crops and grazing, is July 15, 2010. If the crop has not been planted by the final reporting date then to be timely filed, this acreage must be reported by 15 calendar days after planting is completed.

NAP (Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program)

For each crop for which an acreage report is filed, the producer must report all production for that acreage not later than the immediately subsequent crop year acreage reporting date of July 15th. Therefore the deadline to report 2009 production is July 15, 2010. Failure to report production by the production reporting deadline: shall result in the disapproval of any CCC-576 associated with the year in which a notice of loss has been filed; shall have adverse implications for future year approved yield calculations and could result in future ineligibility for NAP assistance on this crop.

The CCC-576, Notice of Loss, is used to report failed acreage and prevented planting and may be completed by any producer with an interest in the crop. The timely filing of a Notice of Loss is required for ALL CROPS INCLUDING GRASSES. For losses on crops covered by NAP, you must file a CCC-576 (notice of loss) in the FSA County Office within 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent.

The requirement for unit certification of acreage and production is independent of the occurrence of crop loss. Producers failing to timely certify unit acreage and production risk ineligibility for NAP assistance or reduced approved yields.

Continuous coverage letters for the 2011 crop year were sent out in May. Please be sure and pay the coverage fee by the application closing date(s) listed in your letters. For more information about the NAP program give the office a call at 559-734-8732 Ext. 2.

Special Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations will be made, upon request, for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment, or hearing impairment to attend or participate in meetings or events sponsored by the Farm Service Agency. If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in one of our events, please call the FSA county office and we will be happy to make any needed arrangements.

Adjusted Gross Income

USDA has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Internal Revenue Service to establish an electronic information exchange process for verifying compliance with the adjusted gross income (AGI) provisions for farm programs. Written consent will be required from each producer or payment recipient for the IRS review process. No actual tax data will be included in the report that IRS sends to USDA.

The agreement ensures that payments are not issued to producers whose AGI exceeds certain limits. The limits set in the 2008 Farm Bill are \$500,000 nonfarm average AGI for commodity and disaster programs; \$750,000 farm average AGI for direct payments; and \$1 million nonfarm average AGI for conservation programs.

Participants in CCC programs subject to average AGI rules must submit form CCC-927 (Individual) and/or CCC-928 (Legal Entity) to the Internal Revenue Service by June 15 to avoid interruption of program benefits. These forms may be obtained from local FSA and NRCS offices or online at: <http://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov/eforms/mainervlet>.

Actively Engaged

USDA has amended the rules that govern the requirements to be 'actively engaged' in farming. These rules apply to eligibility for payments under the Direct and Counter-cyclical Program (DCP) or Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) program administered by the FSA.

Every stockholder or member of a legal entity, such as a corporation, does not have to contribute labor or management if both of the following apply:

- At least half of the interest in the legal entity is held by stockholders or members who are providing active personal labor or active personal management that altogether qualifies as a significant contribution to the farming operation;
- The total direct payments received, both directly and indirectly, by the legal entity and each of the members can not exceed \$40,000.

FSA Signature Policy

Husbands and wives may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and Commodity Credit Corporation programs in which either has an interest. This option is automatically available unless a written request for exclusion is made to the county office staff by either spouse.

There are exceptions to the rule, where spouses may not sign on behalf of each other for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations or other similar entities.

Individual signatures are also required on certain Farm Loan Program and Farm Storage Facility Loan documents. For more clarification on spousal signature authority, contact your local FSA office.

Farm Loan Programs

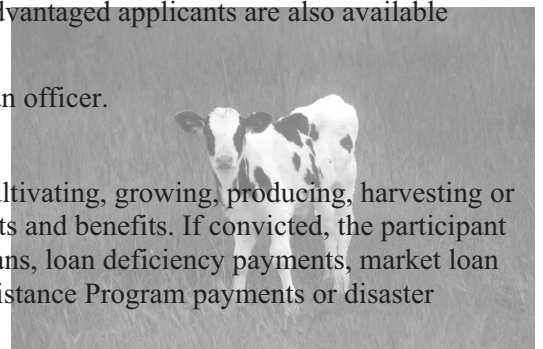
The FSA offers loans for farmers and ranchers to purchase farmland and finance agricultural operations. FSA loan programs are designed to help producers who are temporarily unable to obtain private or commercial credit. In many cases, applicants are beginning farmers who have insufficient net worth to qualify for financing through a commercial lender. In other instances, borrowers might have suffered setbacks from natural disasters or might be persons with limited resources.

Farm ownership loans or farm operating loans may be obtained as direct loans up to a maximum of \$300,000. Guaranteed loans can reach a maximum of \$1,112,000. Emergency loans are always direct loans for farmers who may have suffered physical or production losses in disaster areas designated by a Presidential or Secretarial disaster declaration. Rural Youth Loans, Loans to Beginning Farmers and loans for socially disadvantaged applicants are also available through FSA.

For details contact the county office staff for an appointment with a farm loan officer.

Controlled Substance

Program participants convicted under federal or state law of any planting, cultivating, growing, producing, harvesting or storing a controlled substance are ineligible for any and all program payments and benefits. If convicted, the participant shall be ineligible for direct and counter-cyclical payments, price support loans, loan deficiency payments, market loan gains, storage payments, farm facility loans, Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program payments or disaster payments.



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PRESORTED STANDARD
 U.S. POSTAGE PAID
 Davis, CA
 PERMIT #22

Dates to Remember	
May 10	Tree Assistance Signup Opened
June 15	COC Nominations Period Opens
July 5 (Monday)	Office closed
July 15	Spring seeded crops, permanent crops Certification deadline
August 1	Recons must be requested
Selected Interest Rates for January 2010	
Farm Operating Loans — Direct	3.125%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct	5.125%
Farm Ownership – Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.50%
Emergency Loans	3.750%

Banking Changes?

Almost all Farm Service Agency payments are made electronically using Direct Deposit. This innovation has cut down on the number of missing and late payments and reduced the time required to move funds. It has been calculated that having a problem with a payment is 20 times greater with checks than with Direct Deposit. Another benefit is that Direct Deposit to your account can be made within 48 hours.

To keep the system running smoothly, it's critical to keep the county office staff up to date on changes you might make in your financial institutions.

If you have changed accounts or institutions that might affect the direct deposit of your FSA payments, contact the FSA county office so we can update our files to insure continued uninterrupted service.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer."