



Hawaii & Pacific Basin NEWSLETTER

November 2014



Your Farm Service Agency Online Monthly Newsletter Covering the Latest Topics

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www.fsa.usda.gov/hi

FSA County Committee Elections - Vote Now

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) encourages farmers and ranchers to make their voices heard by voting in the upcoming Farm Service Agency (FSA) County Committee elections. Ballots for the 2014 elections have been mailed to eligible producers across the country. Producers must return ballots to their local FSA offices by the December 1, 2014 deadline to ensure that their vote is counted.

Farm Service Agency County Committee members provide an important link between the local agricultural community and the USDA. Farmers and ranchers elected to county committees help deliver FSA programs at the local level, applying their knowledge and judgment to make decisions on conservation programs; indemnity and disaster programs; emergency programs; and producer eligibility. County committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws.

To be an eligible voter, farmers and ranchers must participate or cooperate in an FSA program. A person who is not of legal voting age, but supervises and conducts the farming operations of an entire farm may also be eligible to vote.

Eligible voters who do not receive ballots may pick one up at their local USDA Service Center or FSA office. The deadline to submit ballots is December 1, 2014. Ballots returned by mail must be postmarked no later than December 1, 2014. Newly elected committee members

and their alternates will take office January 1, 2015.

More information on county committees can be found on the FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov/elections or contact the local USDA Service Center or FSA office.

New "Made in Rural America" Report

As part of the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) commitment to strengthening rural economies, Secretary Tom Vilsack announced a new state-by-state "Made in Rural America" report illustrating the impact of USDA investments in rural communities. Each state factsheet highlights specific USDA investments in rural businesses, manufacturing, energy, water and other infrastructure development and assistance to rural communities to attract businesses and families by investing in housing and broadband.

These fact sheets reflect Secretary Vilsack's efforts to strengthen the "four pillars" of a new economy in rural America: developing a robust bio-based economy; promoting exports and production agriculture fueled by increased productivity and research; encouraging conservation including land management, stewardship and outdoor recreational opportunities; and building a strong local and regional food system to harness entrepreneurial innovation and help small and medium-sized family farms succeed in rural America.

The report's state by state fact sheets are available at www.usda.gov/opportunities. The Hawaii report is available at http://www.usda.gov/documents/Hawaii_Investments.pdf

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Office Hours: Monday—Friday from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm	
Next County Committee Meeting Dates: <u>Hawaii County</u> - January 9 at 8:30 am <u>Honolulu County</u> - November 21 at 3:00 pm <u>Kauai County</u> - December 17 at 8:30 am <u>Maui County</u> - November 20 at 9:00 am <u>Guam County</u> - December 8 at 9:00 am <u>CNMI County</u> - December 8 at 9:00 am Contact the County Office to confirm meeting date and time, as budget constraints may limit the County Committee's ability to meet each month. A list of County Offices, contact numbers and addresses may be found at: http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/hi_cof_staff.pdf	

Get NAP and Avoid Being Left out in the Storm

Business owners buy insurance and hope they never have to use it; however, when it is needed, insurance can be a “business-saver.” In 2014 Hawaii and Pacific Basin producers suffered many weather-related crop losses. Fortunately for those producers who had enrolled their crops in the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) before disaster struck they were able to receive a portion of a total of \$801,000 that was paid out under the program.

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers NAP to provide disaster assistance on crops, including forage, for which there is no commercial insurance, the program requires advance enrollment. [Click here](#) for a list of the sales closing dates for NAP. Although the closing deadline has passed for some crops, there is still time to sign up for grazed forage, fruits and vegetables, and other non-insurable crops covered by NAP.

Coverage under the NAP program does not begin until 30 days after a producer's application is filed and the administrative fee has been paid. To be eligible for NAP, a producer shall pay a nonrefundable service fee in an amount that is equal to the lesser of \$250 per crop, per administrative county; or \$750 per producer, per administrative county, and not to exceed a total of \$1,875 for multiple county producers.

The 2014 Farm Bill expanded NAP to include buy-up protection, similar to buy-up provisions offered under the federal crop insurance program. Producers may elect coverage for each individual crop between 50 and 65 percent, in 5 percent increments, at 100 percent of the average market price. Producers also pay a fixed premium equal to 5.25 percent of the liability. The waiver of service fees will soon be expanded from just limited resource farmers also to include beginning farmers and minority producers. The premiums for buy-up coverage are reduced by 50 percent for those same farmers. Grazing land is not eligible for buy-up coverage. Please contact your local FSA County Office to sign up or address your questions concerning NAP.

Hay Net Access for Producers

Got extra pasture or need pasture? Farm Service Agency's Hay Net website is now available. Visit www.fsa.usda.gov/haynet for more information.

USDA Expands Access to Credit to Help More Beginning and Family Farmers

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced improvements to farm loan programs by expanding eligibility and increasing lending limits to help more beginning and family farmers. As part of this effort, USDA is raising the borrowing limit for the microloan program from \$35,000 to \$50,000; simplifying the lending processes; updating required “farming experience” to include other valuable experiences; and expanding eligible business entities to reflect changes in the way family farms are owned and operated. The changes became effective November 7.

The microloan changes will allow beginning, small and mid-sized farmers to access an additional \$15,000 in loans using a simplified application process with up to seven years to repay. Microloans are part of USDA’s continued commitment to [small and midsized farming operations](#).

In addition to farm related experience, other types of skills may be considered to meet the direct farming experience required for farm loan eligibility such as operation or management of a non-farm business, leadership positions while serving in the military or advanced education in an agricultural field. Also, individuals who own farmland under a different legal entity operating the farm now may be eligible for loans administered by USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA). Producers will have an opportunity to share suggestions on the microloan process, and the definitions of farming experience and business structures through December 8, 2014, the public open comment period.

For more information on farm loans, please visit www.fsa.usda.gov or contact your local Farm Service Agency office.

Tree Assistance Program Available

Orchardists and nursery tree growers who experienced losses from natural disasters that occurred on or after October 1, 2011, can sign up for the Tree Assistance Program (TAP). Authorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014 as a permanent disaster program, TAP provides financial assistance growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines damaged by natural disasters. Learn more about TAP by visiting the Farm Service Agency’s (FSA) [website](#) or by calling for an appointment at your FSA County Office.

Deadline Extended to Submit Receipts for the Transportation Reimbursement Program

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) Hawaii and Pacific Basin has extended the deadline for producers to submit required documentation for the 2014 Reimbursement for Transportation Costs Payment Program (RTCP). The deadline is now set for December 17, 2014.

To be eligible, producers must have signed up for RTCP by September 8, 2014. Producers with questions should contact their FSA County Office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov/hi and click on the RTCP icon.

Beginning Farmer Loans

Farm Service Agency (FSA) assists beginning farmers to finance agricultural enterprises. Under designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. Farm Service Agency 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 farm.

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

Interest Rates for November 2014	
Farm Operating Loans — Direct	2.75 %
MicroLoans	2.75 %
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct	4.125 %
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.50 %
Emergency Loans	3.75 %

Livestock Disaster Assistance Sign-Up

Livestock producers are reminded that livestock disaster assistance programs are open for enrollment now through January 30, 2015.

To expedite applications, all livestock producers who experienced losses are encouraged to make an appointment with their Farm Service Agency (FSA) County Office and then organize their records documenting those losses. Producers' records should include all pertinent information relating to the consequences of the natural disaster, including:

- Documentation of the kind and number of livestock that died, supplemented if possible by photographs or video records of ownership and losses;
- Dates of death supported by birth records or purchase receipts;
- Costs of transporting livestock to safer grounds or to move animals to new pastures;
- Feed purchases if supplies or grazing pastures were destroyed; and
- Crop records, including seed and fertilizer purchases, planting and production records.

Producers can sign-up for the following livestock disaster assistance programs:

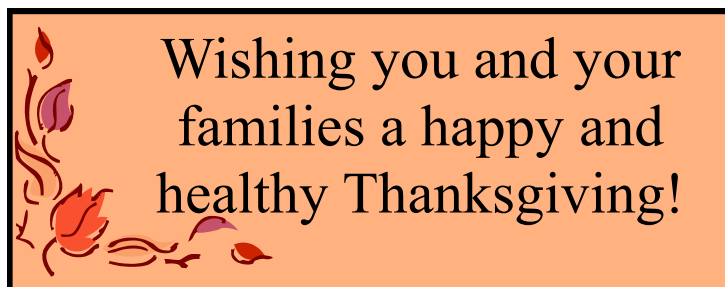
- Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) provides compensation to eligible livestock producers that have suffered grazing losses due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land or fire on federally managed land. Producers who suffered eligible grazing losses should submit a completed CCC-853 and supporting documentation to their local FSA County Office by January 30, 2015.
- Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides compensation to eligible livestock producers that have suffered livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather. Producers who suffered livestock death losses should submit a notice of loss and an application to their local FSA County Office by January 30, 2015.

For more information, producers can review the LFP and LIP Fact Sheets on the [Farm Bill webpage](#).

Producers are encouraged to make an appointment with their local FSA County Office to apply for these programs. Under the 2014 Farm Bill, these programs were made permanent and retroactive with authority granted to cover losses that occurred on or after October 1, 2011.

Dates to Remember

December 1, 2014	Last day to return voted County Committee ballots to USDA Service Center
December 1, 2014	Deadline to enroll in Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) for fruits, vegetables, pasture and herbs
December 17, 2014	Deadline to submit application documentation for the Reimbursement of Transportation Cost Payment Program
January 30, 2015	Deadline to apply for Livestock Forage Disaster Program and Livestock Indemnity Program
May 11, 2015	Deadline for American Samoa & Guam producers to apply for Emergency Loans due to flooding and Tropical Storm Halong
May 12, 2015	Deadline for Hawaii & Maui County producers to apply for Emergency Loans due to impacts of Hurricane Iselle



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Need Information?
Find the information you are looking for at:

Make an Appointment with FSA
Save time and call ahead to set an appointment. For your local FSA Service Center contact information [click here](#).

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