

November 2012



Cass County FSA Updates

Cass County

FSA Office

1127 E State St
Cassopolis, MI 49031

Phone: 269-445-8641

Fax: 269-445-0619

County Executive Director:
Daniel Brauer

Farm Loan Manager:
William B Hogan
Farm Loan Officer:
Estanislado (Stan) Munoz

Program Technicians:
Judith Kidman, Zelda Cloud,
Rhonda Barnett

County Committee Elections

Ballots will be mailed to all eligible voters on November 5, 2012. If for some reason you do not receive a ballot, feel free to notify the county FSA Office.

Completed and signed ballots must be returned to the county office by close of business on December 3, 2012.

2013 Reporting of Fall Seeded Crops

All producers are reminded that the acreage reporting date for **Perennial Forage, Fall Wheat and all other Fall-Seeded Small Grains** has changed beginning with the crop planted for 2013 harvest. The new acreage reporting date was **November 15, 2012, but reports may still be made without late fees being assessed.** Please call for an appointment to certify your planted crop ASAP.

USDA Announces Hispanic and Women Farmer and Rancher Claims Period Now

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers who allege discrimination by the USDA in past decades can file claims between September 24, 2012 and 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 their applications 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.

The Department will continue reaching out to potential Hispanic and female claimants, around the country to get the word out to individuals who may be eligible for this program so they have the opportunity to participate.

Call center representatives can be reached at 1-888-508-4429. Claimants must register for a claims package (by calling the number or visiting the website, www.farmerclaims.gov, and the claims package will be mailed to claimants. Claims period is September 24, 2012 – March 25, 2013.

Electronic Services Available

If a producer has Internet access, program participants can access many services from home 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and receive approval and payment by direct deposit within 48 hours.

To participate in these services, you must meet all program eligibility requirements. Online services have stringent security measures to protect your private information.

To utilize electronic services a producer needs an active USDA eAuthentication Level 2 account, which requires an e-mail address and filling out an online registration form at www.eauth.egov.usda.gov/ followed by a visit to the county office for identity verification.

If you would like assistance establishing your account, just contact your local USDA Service Center.

Emergency Loans

Multiple Disaster Designations have been issued affecting Michigan counties. Area counties have been designated eligible for Emergency farm loans. The loans cover losses caused by the combined effects of several weather events during the winter and spring of 2012, and continuing, including excessive heat, drought and frost/freeze. Qualifying producers may receive Emergency Loans at an interest rate of 2.125%. To be eligible, a farm must have suffered at least a 30% loss in one of its major crops, due to one of the covered perils and be unable to obtain similar financing from a commercial lender (other eligibility requirements also apply). Applications will be accepted through March 1, 2013, or April 29, 2013, depending on the cause of the loss. If you have any questions regarding Emergency Loans or other FSA Farm Loan Programs, please contact our office.

Increased Guaranteed Loan Limit

The Farm Service Agency has announced that the loan limit for the Guaranteed Loan Program will increase to \$1,302,000 on October 1, 2012.

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 will also increase 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.

Marketing Assistance Loans

A Marketing Assistance Loan (MAL) is available for producers who share in the risk of producing the crop. To be eligible, a producer must maintain continual beneficial interest in the crop from harvest through the earlier of the date the loan is repaid or CCC takes title to the commodity. Once beneficial interest in a commodity is lost, the commodity is ineligible for loan -- even if the producer regains beneficial interest.

Commodity loan eligibility also requires compliance with conservation and wetland protection requirements; beneficial interest requirements, acreage reporting and ensuring that the commodity meets Commodity Credit Corporation minimum grade and quality and standards. The quality of the commodity in farm storage must be maintained throughout the term of the loan.

Producers do not have to participate in the Direct and Counter-Cyclical and/or ACRE Programs to be eligible for commodity loans.

Violating provisions of a marketing assistance loan may result in liquidated damages, calling the loan and denial of future farm-stored loans.

Disaster Assistance

SURE

Signup for the SURE program for 2011 crop losses will begin October 22, 2012, and will end June 7, 2013.

NAP

The deadline to purchase a NAP insurance policy on fruit crops for the 2013 crop year is November 20th and March 15th for vegetables.

If you have an interest in our disaster programs, please contact your local FSA Office.

Highly Erodible Lands and Wetland Compliance

Producers participating in most programs administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are required to abide by certain conditions on any land owned or farmed that is highly erodible or that is considered a wetland.

To be in compliance with the highly erodible land conservation and wetland conservation provisions, producers must agree, that they will not:

- Produce an agricultural commodity on highly erodible land without a conservation system;
- Plant an agricultural commodity on a converted wetland;
- Convert a wetland to make possible the production of an agricultural commodity.

Producers planning to remove fence rows, convert woodlots to cropland, combine crop fields, divide a crop field into two or more fields, install new drainage, or improve or modify existing drainage, must notify the FSA and update Form AD-1026. FSA will notify NRCS and NRCS will then provide highly erodible land or wetland

technical determinations.

To get additional information on highly erodible land wetland conservation compliance contacts the local FSA or the NRCS office at a local USDA Service Center. Additional information about conservation programs offered by FSA can be found online at www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation, and information on NRCS programs can be found at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>.

2013 Record Corrections

All producers with record corrections (i.e.: no longer farming, added a farm, ownership changes) need to start reporting those changes so we can have your records as accurate as possible.

Dates to Remember

November 20 - Sales closing date for 2013 NAP apricots, asparagus, blueberries, sweet/tart cherries, cane berries, (raspberries), grapes, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums, rhubarb, and strawberries.

November 22 - Office closed in observance of Thanksgiving Day.

December 1 - Sales closing date for 2013 NAP honey and maple sap.

December 3 - Final date for County Committee Election ballots to be postmarked or returned.

December 25 - Office closed in observance of Christmas Day.

January 1 – Office closed in observance of New Year's Day.

January 15 - Final date to report apples, blueberries, cherries, grapes, and peaches.

January 21 – Office closed in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day

January 31 - Final date to request 2012 wool loan or LDP.

February 1- Sales closing date for 2013 onions.

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).