



Ottawa County News

Ottawa County USDA Service Center

Ottawa County FSA
16731 Ferris St
Grand Haven, MI 49417
616-842-5852 (phone)
616-842-2820 (fax)
www.fsa.usda.gov/mi

Hours

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

County Committee

Kirk Haverdink, Chair
Wayne Hecksel, Vice
Chair
David Pyle, Regular
Member

County Committee Advisor

Helen Dietrich

COC Meetings

First Wednesday of each
month at 9:00 a.m.

Farm Program Staff

Blain Becktold, CED
Dawn Essenburg, PT
Jackie French, PT
Andrew Stille, PT
Les Kloosterman, Field
Tech

Farm Loan Staff

Leslie Wills, FLO
Susan McIntosh, PT



2010 DCP/ACRE Sign-up

Enrollment for the 2010 Direct and countercyclical Program (DCP) and ACRE has begun and will continue through **June 1, 2010**. Advance payments available. Call for an appointment today.

Biomass Crop Assistance Program

The Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) was established to offer financial assistance for producers or entities with the collection, storage, harvest and transportation (CHST) of eligible material for use in biomass conversion facilities. To receive payment, producers and entities must deliver the material to a qualified Biomass Conversion Facility (BCF) and the biomass material must be listed as an eligible material. For more information on the BCAP program, please contact your local FSA County Office.

2009 Crop Commodity Loans

Marketing assistance loans provide producers interim financing at harvest time to meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows. Loans mature on the last day of the ninth calendar month following the month in which the loan is approved. The current interest rate is 1.375% and the loan rates are as follows:

\$1.95	Soft Red Wheat
\$2.08	Soft White Wheat
\$1.32	Oats
\$1.95	Corn
\$5.02	Soybeans
\$7.90	Sunflower Seed
\$8.41	Canola

AGI and Actively Engaged

USDA has finalized 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 payment recipient for the tax review process. No actual tax data will be included in the report that IRS sends to USDA.

This agreement will ensure 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 annually certify their eligibility to receive benefits** by either submitting a statement from a certified public accountant or an attorney, or by completing form CCC-926. This form may be obtained from local FSA and NRCS offices or online at:

<http://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov/eforms/mainervlet>

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 (DCP) or Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) program administered by the Farm Service Agency. 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

and

The total direct payments received, both directly and indirectly, by the legal entity and each of the members does not exceed \$40,000.00

2010-2012 Leases

Starting with the 2010 crop year, all leases must include, at a minimum, the following information:

- Length of lease: multi-year lease must list number of years
- Owner(s) and operators printed names **and** signatures
- Signature dates
- Type of lease: cash, share, barter, etc.

2009 County Committee Election Results – LAA 3

Kirk Haverdink – Chair
Wayne Hecksell – Vice Chair
David Pyle – Member
Helen Dietrich – Minority Advisor

Power of Attorney

Did you know you can retain an agent to act on your behalf for programs and transactions authorized under the 2008 Farm Bill and most other FSA administered programs? This can be done by completing an FSA-211: Power of Attorney. The form is available at your local USDA Service Center or on-line at <http://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov>. Forms completed outside FSA offices must be notarized. To find out more, call the office.



Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program

SURE provides benefits for farm revenue losses due to natural disaster. Unlike the prior USDA Crop Disaster Programs, SURE is legislated through 2011. For SURE program purposes, a “farm” refers to all acreage in all counties that is planted or intended to be planted to crops that are for sale by the producer, and all hay crops.

SURE payments are available to producers on farms that are located in a county covered by a qualifying natural disaster declaration (USDA Secretarial Declarations only) or in a contiguous county or the actual production is less than 50% of the normal production. In order to receive payments, the farm must suffer at least a 10% eligible production loss on at least one crop of economic significance.

For a producer to be eligible for the SURE Program, **all of the farming operation’s crops** (planted or intended) that are of economic significance must be covered by either Federal Crop Insurance (CI) or FSA’s Noninsurable Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage. Coverage must also be obtained for other crops for which CI or NAP is available, such as nursery, honey, aquaculture, and floriculture. **Insurance coverage must be obtained on alfalfa and hay crops for forage**; however, coverage for grazed crops is not required for SURE.

Eligible farmers and ranchers who meet the definition of Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, or Beginning Farmer or Rancher do not have to meet the RMPR requirement.

Producers with qualifying losses are eligible to receive 60% of the difference between the SURE Disaster Program Guarantee and the actual Farm Revenue. The guarantee is determined by totaling the calculated guarantee for each crop. For insured crops, the guarantee is based on the level of coverage the producer has elected. Higher levels of coverage will result in higher crop guarantees. For NAP crops, the guarantee is based on a formula that includes the yield, acreage, and price factors. The farm’s Disaster Program guarantee cannot exceed 90% of the expected revenue for the farm.

Included in the Total Farm Revenue calculation are estimated crop value, CI indemnities, NAP payments, Market Assistance Loan proceeds, and other disaster payments, DCP payments (15% of direct payments, plus all CC payments and ACRE payments).

To assist farmers and ranchers in evaluating their options with SURE, USDA has created a SURE Calculator. To utilize the Calculator, visit the FSA website (www.fsa.usda.gov). Under “I Want to...” in the upper right corner, click on “View Farm Bill Information.”

Signup began January 4, 2010

The 2008 Farm Bill authorized several new disaster programs in addition to SURE. Contact your local FSA County Office for more information.

- Livestock Incentive Program (LIP). Signup began July 13, 2009.
- Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP). Signup began September 9, 2009.
- Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP). Signup began September 9, 2009.
- Tree Assistance Program (TAP). Signup to be announced

Foreign Buyers Notification

The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) requires all foreign owners of U.S. agricultural land to report their holdings to the Secretary of Agriculture. The Farm Service Agency administers this program for USDA. Foreign persons who have purchased or sold agricultural land in the county are required to report the transaction to FSA within 90 days of the closing. Failure to submit the AFIDA form could result in civil penalties of up to 25% of the fair market value of the property. County government offices, realtors, attorneys and others involved in real estate transactions are reminded to notify foreign investors of these reporting requirements.

Help Wanted

If you live in the Macatawa Watershed Project (MWP) you may have or will be receiving a survey from MWP. This survey purpose is supported by the FSA and it is important and worthwhile to take just a few minutes to fill out and return as it will help MWP learn more about farmers, farmland and water quality issues to help determine priority agricultural projects in the future. Plus, simply by taking the time to fill out the survey, you will have the chance to win VISA gift cards.

West Michigan farmers are also being asked to help guide future decisions and funding for agriculture in Michigan by taking an online survey conducted by the Land Policy Institute of MSU, in conjunction with the West Michigan Strategic Alliance. To take part in this survey, go to tr.im/r4u7

Controlled Substance

Any person who is convicted under federal or state law of a controlled substance violation could be ineligible for USDA payments or benefits. Violations include planting, harvesting or growing a prohibited plant. Prohibited plants include marijuana, opium poppies and other drug producing plants.

Spousal Signature

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. Spouses may not sign power of attorney forms on behalf of each other or sign on behalf of the other as an authorized signatory for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations or other similar entities. Spouses must have a power of attorney on file or sign personally for claim settlements, such as promissory notes, and on security documents for price support loans.

MSU/NRCS SOIL EROSION WORKSHOP

Educational workshop on practical and proven methods for reducing soil erosion. Only \$15.00 and this includes lunch and materials. February 25 @ 9:00am at Allegan Human Services Bldg. Must pre-register. Call Mike Staton @269-673-0370 for more information.

Major Changes to the Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) Program!

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 made the following major changes to the FSFL Program, effective August 17, 2009:

- adds eligible FSFL commodities including fruit and vegetable cold storage facilities, hay and renewable biomass
- adds FSFL terms of 10 and 12 years
- authorizes one partial disbursement
- increases the maximum FSFL amount to \$500,000 per FSFL
- allows borrowers to increase the required down payment from 15 percent to 20 percent to negate the requirement for a severance agreement
- increases the non-refundable FSFL application fee to \$100 per eligible borrower.

Fruits and vegetables (FAVs) have been added as eligible FSFL commodities and cold storage facilities as eligible structures. FAVs eligible for cold storage facilities include, but are not limited to: apples, blueberries, asparagus, cabbage, grapes, potatoes, watermelons, pumpkins and squash. Controlled atmosphere storage structures are **not** eligible for FSFL. Hay is defined as a grass or legume that has been cut and stored, and includes commonly used grass mixtures and forage legumes. Grain legumes for hay are also included, and are defined as hay where the entire plant, including the seeds, is harvested at maturity and used for animal feed.

Renewable biomass is defined as any organic matter that is available on a renewable or recurring basis used for the production of energy in the form of heat, electricity, and liquid, solid or gaseous fuels. Renewable biomass includes crop residue (corn stover, orchard prunings, etc.), plants and trees excluding old growth timber, renewable plant materials (feed grains or other agricultural commodities), and vegetative waste material (wood waste and residues, food waste, yard waste). **Manure from any source is not included.**

Total principal amount term options for FSFLs are as follows:

- \$100,000 or less the term is 7 years only
- \$100,000.01 to \$250,000, the borrower can specify 7 or 10 years
- \$250,000.01 to \$500,000, the borrower can specify 7, 10, or 12 years.

To be eligible for FSFL, the borrower must:

- be a producer of a facility loan commodity
- demonstrate a need for increased storage capacity
- show the ability to repay FSFL through the financial analysis process
- meet all other eligibility requirements.

FSFLs are approved and disbursed to a farming operation that is an eligible entity or an eligible producer at the time of approval. FSFL regulations allow that if any changes are made to a farming operation with an outstanding FSFL, the borrower must either find an eligible borrower or entity to assume FSFL, repay FSFL, or undergo new financial analysis to ensure that CCC's interests are protected and that the current borrower is in a position to continue making the scheduled FSFL payments.

FSFL collateral must be used for the purpose for which the storage facility was erected, constructed, assembled, or installed for the entire FSFL term. The intent of the FSFL Program is to provide on-farm storage to producers for storing eligible facility loan commodities they produce and not for any other purpose. The FSFL Program does not have the resources to provide financing for commercial storage facilities. Contact your local FSA County Office for more information or to schedule an appointment to start a Farm Storage Facility Loan application.

Special Accommodations

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in any meeting or event should contact Blain Becktold by phone at (616) 842-5852 ext 10 or by e-mail at blain.becktold@mi.usda.gov.

Bank Account Changes

Current policy mandates that FSA payments be electronically transferred into your bank account. In order for timely payments to be made, producers need to notify the FSA county office if your account has been changed or if another financial institution purchases your bank. Payments can be delayed if the FSA office is not aware of updates to your account and routing numbers.

Appeal Process

After an FSA official makes a decision on your request for USDA services or application, you will be sent a letter informing you of the decision and options you can pursue if you disagree.

Generally, program participants have three choices — an informal review with the original agency decision-maker, an opportunity for mediation and finally an appeal to the next level of authority within the agency.

Cooperation with RMA:

The Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000 requires the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Risk Management Agency (RMA) to work together to improve program compliance and integrity of the Federal Crop Insurance Program. As a result of the passage of the 2000 Act, RMA and FSA are required to coordinate a plan to identify, address and reconcile discrepancies of all relevant producer-derived information, and to coordinate a monitoring program to include fact finding relative to allegations of program fraud, waste, and abuse.

FSA will assist RMA and insurance providers in monitoring conditions throughout the growing season and conduct growing season inspections. All suspected cases of fraud, waste, and abuse concerning the Federal Crop Insurance Program will be referred to RMA. FSA will also assist RMA with auditing claims. Producers may also report suspected cases of fraud, waste, and abuse to their local FSA County Office, the RMA Office or OIG.

Customer Statement

January signals the beginning of a new year, and a time to start thinking about filing taxes. Producers who have signed up for a USDA eAuthentication Level 2 account will be able to access their farm data via their customer statement. The Customer Statement puts a range of USDA services and programs into a single report that's at your fingertips and available online, 24 hours a day, seven days a week arm data via their Customer. It allows USDA customers to view their participation, application and payment status in various commodity and conservation programs; information on farm loans; and conservation plan and land unit information Statement.

Dates to Remember

Jan 31st	Final Date to Request 2009 Crop Wool & Mohair Loans or LDP's
Feb 1 st	Last day to purchase NAP on onions
Feb 15 th	Office Closed: All President's Day
Mar 15 th	Last day to purchase Crop Insurance or NAP on spring seeded annual crops
Continues	Farm Storage Facility Loans
Continues	Continuous Conservation Reserve Program
Continues	SURE Program
Continues	BCAP Program
Feb 25	Soil Erosion Workshop/Allegan

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its program 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 to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.