

Honolulu County USDA Service Center

Honolulu County FSA
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Aiea, Hawaii, 96701
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Hours

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

County Committee

Harry Choy
Dominic Kadooka
Miles Takano

Staff

Farm Program Technician
Gwen Zakahi

Farm Loan Program
Technician
Sharlene Hamamoto

Farm Loan Officer
Melissa Motosue

Farm Loan Specialist
Laurie Talbo

County Executive Director
Jason Shitanishi

Honolulu County Receives Secretarial Disaster Designation

Designation Allows Farmers and Ranchers to Apply for USDA Assistance

On February 05, 2009, Honolulu County received a USDA Secretarial Disaster Designation as a primary natural disaster area because of losses caused by rain and flooding that occurred from December 10 through 16, 2009. This is a separate designation from the Presidential Disaster Declaration received on Jan. 05, 2009, and announced in our January, 2009 newsletter. Qualified farm operators in Honolulu County are eligible for low interest emergency (EM) loans from USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), provided eligibility requirements are met. Farmers in eligible counties have eight months (October 05, 2009) from the date of the designation to apply for loans to help cover part of their actual losses. FSA will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability. FSA has a variety of programs, in addition to the EM loan program, to help eligible farmers recover from adversity.

USDA has other programs available to assist farmers and ranchers, including the Emergency Conservation Program, Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program, Federal Crop Insurance, and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program. Interested farmers may contact their local USDA Service Centers for further information on eligibility requirements and application procedures for these and other programs. Additional information is also available online at: <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov>.

Comment Period on Payment Limitations and Payment Eligibility Extended

The comment period for the regulation defining actively engaged participation in a farming operation has been extended for an additional 60 days, FSA is seeking a diverse range of comments from different areas of the United States and farming communities.

With this extension, the public may continue to submit comments until April 6, 2009. The extension document is available at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/federalNotices?are=home&subject=lare&topic=frd-ii>.

The regulation, published Dec. 29, 2008, invited comments on the interim rule for implementation of key eligibility requirements for many FSA and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs. The regulations were revised as mandated by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill) to make changes in payment eligibility, payment attribution, maximum income limits and maximum dollar benefit amounts for participants in CCC-funded programs. In addition, certain provisions were incorporated that are discretionary.

The actively engaged provision requires that individuals and entities must be "actively engaged in farming" with respect to a farming operation in order to be eligible for specified payments and benefits. To be "actively engaged in farming," the individual or entity must make significant contributions to the farming operation of (1) capital, equipment, land, or a combination; and (2) personal labor or active personal management, or a combination.

Under rules in effect since 1988, not every member of an entity is required to contribute active personal labor or management. The interim rule requires each partner, stockholder, or member with an ownership interest to make a contribution of active personal labor or active personal management. The contribution must be regular and substantial, and documented as well as separate and distinct from any other member's contribution. The rule limits the ability of passive stockholders to continue to realize benefits from the entity.

The substantive rule changes make the requirement for adding new persons to a farming operation more restrictive. The addition of a person to an existing farming operation can be met through an increase of 20 percent of base acres to the operation; previously the requirement was an increase of 20 percent in cropland.

Inside This Issue

**USDA Secretarial
Disaster Designation**

**Hawaii AgriBusiness
Training**

**Payment Limitations
Payment Eligibility**

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