



January 2007

Branch County News

Branch County FSA
387 N Willowbrook, Ste. F
Coldwater, MI 49036
517-278-2725 (phone)
517-278-5176 (fax)

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

County Committee
Curt Albright
Neil Carpenter
Kevin Miller
Bobbi Snyder

Staff
Kelly Gruner, PT
Joyce Hook, PT
Linda Snyder, PT
Connie Wilkinson, PT
Marlene Marshall, CED

Dates To Remember

January 15
Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday
Office Closed

February 19
President's Day – Office
closed - **Farmer's Day**

March 15
Final Day to Purchase NAP
for Spring Crops

March 31
Final Date to Request Loans
& LDP's for 2006 Wheat,
Oats, Barley, and Honey

May 28
Memorial Day – Office Closed

May 31
Final Date to Request Loans
& LDP's for 2006 Corn, Soy-
beans, and Grain Sorghum

Continues
Farm Storage Facility Loans
Continuous CRP
MILCX



County Committee Election

Congratulations to Neil Carpenter! Neil was re-elected to represent farmers from LAA #2 on the county committee. Leon Knirk was elected 1st alternate to the committee.

FSA appreciates all of the voters for taking the time to complete the election ballot. The county committee system works only because of your participation.

IMPORTANT CHANGES

There is additional work required nationwide for all programs this year. We are required to review everyone's eligibility forms and signature authority for all payments. This is a big undertaking and may delay payments.

Thank you for your patience and understanding!! We will proceed as quickly as possible.

MEASUREMENT SERVICE RATES CHANGE

Measurement service rates have changed to a minimum of \$46.00 per request. This includes one hour of service. There is an additional charge of \$8.00 for every 30 minutes after the first hour.

Farmer's Day February 19

The Branch County FSA Office will have an exhibit at Farmer's Day. Stop by our booth and learn how to obtain authorization to use our programs online for your farming operation. We will also have information on the programs available through FSA. Stop and see us; we're here to help you.



Movement of Grain under Loan

Grain under loan that has been disposed of through feeding, selling or any other form of disposal without prior written authorization from the county office staff is considered unauthorized disposition. The financial penalties are severe and it may affect a producer's ability to obtain future farm-stored loans. Always call the office before any loan grain is fed, moved, or sold.



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.

Emergency Low Interest Loans

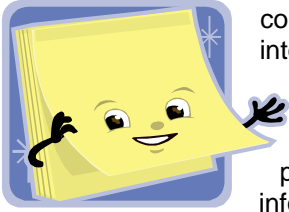
Emergency loans are available to all qualified farm operators in Branch County, as a result of losses in contiguous counties caused by the following natural disasters:

- Frost & freeze, from 4/25/06-10/15/06
Deadline to apply is 7/9/07
- Excessive rain, flooding, high winds, & hail from 4/26/06-7 & continuing
Deadline to apply is 7/16/07.

These loans are designed to help cover part of actual losses. FSA will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses, security available, and repayment ability. Terms of the loan to recover from production losses will normally be scheduled for up to 7 years. The current interest rate is 3.75% per annum.

Interested Branch County producers should contact Russ LaFollette at 517-849-9890.

OWNERS - TAKE NOTE



Farm owners, if you are renting your farm to a new operator or selling your property, please contact the FSA office for your farm's base and yield information. Please don't send them into the FSA office for this data. Under the Freedom of Information Act, we can only give base and yield data to the present owner or operator.

By having the information, you will be able to give the bases and yields to new producers interested in your property. They will need the bases and yields to make an informed decision.

We need your help to keep our records up to date!! Please notify our office of ownership changes. We are NOT notified by any other means. We will need to know both seller and buyer information.

Wool, Mohair, and Unshorn Pelt Producers

January 31, 2007 is the final date to request 2006 loans or loan deficiency payments (LDP's) on wool or mohair. January 31, 2007 is also the deadline to apply for LDP's on unshorn pelts. Make sure you have the proper forms on file BEFORE you lose beneficial interest in the wool, mohair, or pelts. The market price has been below the loan rate, so there has been a loan deficiency payment in effect.

Soybean LDP's

Soybean loan deficiency payment (LDP) rates were in effect for three days in 2006. If you sold your soybeans directly from the field to the elevator on September 28, October 12 or 24, you may be eligible for a LDP. You will need to bring production evidence into the office or go online for an e-LDP prior to May 31, 2007.

Producers and Landowners!

- Do you intend to clear timber areas to create or to expand existing crop areas?
- Are you converting a pasture field into a crop field?
- Are there any areas on your farm(s), which you are considering cropping, that have not been cropped in recent years?
- Is there a wet spot in a field which you want drained to make cropping easier?
- Are you disturbing a wildlife habitat area of any type?
- Are you doing anything different on your farm(s) this year?

These are Highly Erodible and Wetland provision questions, which need to be considered each year by producers to assure that they may remain eligible for USDA benefits. If you are going to do any of the above, be sure to complete a new AD-1026, Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HEL) And Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification form, prior to such activities occurring. If you have any question or concern that something you plan to do on your farm could jeopardize your eligibility for benefits, please contact your Natural Resources Conservation Service office (NRCS) representative before you begin work. They can be reached at (517) 278-2725, EXT 3.

Conservation Compliance

Highly erodible land (HEL) compliance is still required to earn program benefits. This includes payments under the Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program, Conservation Reserve Program, loan deficiency payments (LDP's), Farm Loan Program, crop insurance and many other USDA programs. Farms with HEL soils need to be aware of tillage, crop residue, and rotation requirements spelled out in their conservation plans or through their conservation system. If you have any questions about the specifics of your conservation plan or system, stop by the Natural Resources Conservation Service office. Take the time now to make sure your farm is in compliance! Don't wait until the plow hits the ground!

NAP Deadline Approaching

March 15, 2007 is the final date for producers to apply for NAP coverage on spring-seeded annual crops (including, but not limited to barley, oats and vegetables).

Report Changes to Your Bank Account

You need to notify this office if you close your account, change banks, or if another financial institution purchases your bank. Payments can be delayed if we are not aware of changes to your account or routing numbers.

Payment Limitation

Determinations Producers are reminded that no program benefits may be made until the FSA office has made all the necessary payment limitation and eligibility determinations. Producers will remain ineligible until all the required forms that include information pertaining to their farming operations are provided to the office. The FSA county committee or the producer may initiate the payment limitation and payment eligibility determinations. If the producer requests the determination, the request may be filed anytime before the final date for submitting form CCC-502 (Farm Operating Plan for Payment Eligibility Review).

Programs and Payment Limits The following programs are subject to the following payment limitation.

- DCP: Direct Payment - \$40,000 per crop year
- DCP: Counter-Cyclical Payment - \$65,000 per crop year
- LDP's: \$75,000 per crop year
- Market Gains: \$75,000 per crop year
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) - \$50,000 per fiscal year
- Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) - \$200,000
- Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) - \$100,000 per crop year
- Environmental Quality Incentive Payments (EQIP) - \$450,000 through the life of the farm bill

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| \$\$\$\$ Dollar Limits per Crop Year By Program |
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Providing Information Statutory provisions require that all entities; individuals, partnerships, joint operations, corporations, trusts, etc. provide the names, addresses and ID numbers of the entity's members to the county committee. Also, entities must inform their members of the requirement for designating "permitted entities" for payment purposes. Spouses may be considered separate "persons" for payment limitation purposes if this determination is requested and all the applicable requirements to be determined a "person" are met.

Attention Husbands & Wives

A husband and wife may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and Commodity Credit Corporation programs in which either has an interest. This does not apply to Loans and LDP's. This option is automatically available unless a written request for exclusion is made to the county office staff by either spouse.

Civil Rights Complaint Process

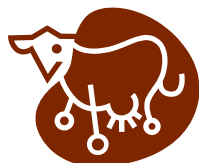
Any person, class or group of persons may file a discrimination complaint with 180 days of an alleged discriminatory action. Complaints may be filed in writing or orally with the agency head, any designated agency official or the Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Assistance in filing a complaint can be obtained by calling or visiting any FSA office.

2007 DCP Sign Up Underway

June 1 is the deadline for farmers to enroll in the Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP) for 2007. Contracts signed after June 1, but no later than September 30, 2007, will require a \$100.00 late fee per farm. **Remember:** You MUST ENROLL EACH YEAR. Producers with a Level 2 eAuthentication account can do an eDCP online.

The DCP has both direct payment and counter-cyclical payment components. While strong market prices for commodities may eliminate the counter-cyclical payments, the direct payments are fixed. Advance direct payments for 2007 have changed to 22% of the payment rate. For crop year 2007, there will only be 1 advance counter cyclical payment. The projected counter cyclical payment will be issued after completing the first 6 months of the marketing year.

Milk Program



Just a reminder to all producers that are signed up for the MILCX program to keep submitting those milk stubs! The program continues through September, 2007. Milk producers that are not already signed up may still do so at any time before the program end date.

Any producer wishing to change the start month must do so on or before the 14th of the month before the month you are changing to.

eGov Help Available

Producers wishing to conduct their USDA business online can now do so. We can help you gain access to those e-programs and e-services that require authentication of the producer's identity.

There will be an e-Gov meeting at the county office on March 20, 2007 at 9:00 a.m. Please contact the office if you plan to attend.



Marketing Assistance Loans

Marketing Assistance loans (also known as commodity loans) are available for wheat, barley, oats, soybeans, grain sorghum, and corn. These loans can be either farm stored or warehouse stored. The deadline to apply for a loan or LDP on 2006 crop corn or soybeans is May 31, 2007. The deadline for barley, oats, and wheat is March 31, 2007.

To be eligible for 9-month loans, you must comply with Sod/Swamp requirements, report all cropland acreage on the farm, have beneficial interest in the commodity, and ensure that the commodity meets CCC minimum grade and quality standards. You do not have to participate in the Direct and Counter Cyclical Program on a farm to be eligible for loans or LDP's.

Producers who take out farm stored loans should remember that they are responsible for maintaining the quality of the commodity through the term of the loan.

New Lien Search Policy for Marketing Assistance Loans: A new policy allows the office to disburse marketing assistance loans without conducting lien searches when the loan is for less than \$25,000. Financing statements are still required to be filed on farm stored loans to perfect Commodity Credit Corporation's interest. Lien searches will be performed and financing statements filed regardless of the loan amount if the aggregate amount of the loan principal for the crop year exceeds \$25,000.

The U.S. 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, SW., Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Special accommodations will be made for the physically handicapped, visually impaired or hearing impaired upon request. If accommodation is required, contact Marlene Marshall, County Executive Director, at (517) 278-2725 ext. 2.