

# MICHIGAN



## Farm Service Agency

Michigan State Newsletter • October 2006

Michigan Farmers:

Welcome to the 2006 fall Michigan Farm Service Agency Newsletter. We are excited about everything that has been happening in Michigan this year. We have been working hard at getting the digitized maps out to the counties and they in turn will be sending them out to the producers as they are available. These maps are outstanding and I want to thank our employees that have been working on them.

Our CRP 33 sign-up has gone well this year with 457 offers being accepted resulting in 12,318.6 acres. The CRP REX 2007 through 2010 resulted in 4313 contracts offering 1-5 year extensions or 10-15 year re-enrollments resulting in 131,999.8 acres. This is a very positive direction for Michigan as you continue to protect your farmland and protect the wildlife habitat as well.

As we get ready for harvest we all need to remember to complete form CCC-633EZ Page 1 prior to losing beneficial interest in the crop. The CCC-633EZ must be on file whether you intend to complete an eLDP on line or go into the County Office.

Please take the time to read through the information inside as there are many sources to help you manage your farm operation and to help you expedite the application process for FSA programs.

I hope all of you have a bountiful harvest and remember to **THINK SAFETY FIRST!**

Nancy Dietz  
State Executive Director  
Michigan Farm Service Agency



### Farm Loan Programs

This year has been very busy for Farm Loan staff as we work with clients from across the state to process their loan and servicing requests. FSA has various loan programs to help farms. Loans are available to purchase cattle, machinery, and equipment, provide operating funds for annual expenses, and in some cases purchase or improve real estate property. FSA also offers emergency loan assistance to those adversely impacted by disastrous weather conditions. FSA loans can be tailored to meet your needs. If you have a credit need, please contact your local Farm Loan Manager.

### USDA Nondiscrimination Statement

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 to:

USDA, Director  
Office of Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250-9410

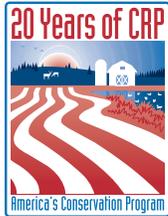
or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or  
(202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal  
opportunity provider and employer.

#### REMINDER:

Farm Service Agency  
Employment Opportunities

Check out employment opportunities with  
the FARM SERVICE AGENCY at the  
following <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov>

# Farm the Best, Conserve the Rest



Enroll your Environmentally Sensitive Cropland into the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP).

The Continuous Conservation Reserve

Program (CCRP) is a voluntary enrollment program in which landowners and operators are given the opportunity to establish conservation covers on environmentally sensitive cropland to reduce soil erosion, improve wildlife habitat and food sources.

Acreage is placed under contracts that range from 10 to 15 years in length. In return, the participant receives annual rental and maintenance payments, incentive payments for certain practices, and cost-share for practice establishment.

To be eligible for the CCRP, participants and acreage must meet certain eligibility requirements. Provided that the eligibility requirements are met, FSA will automatically accept enrollment acreage into the CCRP. As the program name implies, land can be enrolled on a continuous basis any time of the year.

The CCRP is but one component of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Periodically, the USDA conducts whole field enrollment opportunities into the Conservation Reserve Program that are known as General Sign-ups. Under General Sign-ups, individual acreage enrollment offers are selected under a competitive process based on a score known as the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI). The last CRP General Sign-up, the 33rd, ended on April 28, 2006. Eligible cropland that was not accepted during that general sign-up can be re-offered during the next general sign-up or offered under the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP).

For more information on the CRP and CCRP enrollment requirements, available practices and program payments, please contact your local FSA office or visit our website at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/cepd/crp.htm>.

## FALL HARVEST FARM SAFETY



In rural areas it is a well-known fact that work on the farm continues all year long. The spring planting is hardly complete when preparation for the winter wheat harvest begins. The art of the readiness ritual includes getting machinery in good working order. Repairing broken equipment or performing maintenance on large farm machinery can be very dangerous. Research has revealed that agricultural fatality rates are five times that of other industries. For this reason the Farm Service Agency (FSA) wants to remind producers to exercise caution around heavy equipment at all times.

For many farmers it will take days or even weeks in the farm shop to get everything ready for harvest. Adjusting the tension on chains, replacing worn parts, and applying grease and oil where needed are just some of the items that are on a producer's equipment checklist. It is also important to insure that safety shields are in place and danger zones are clearly marked. The florescent orange slow moving vehicle signs are required by law for all tractors, wagons, and combines that travel under 35 MPH on the road. Thorough advance preparation will not only save time but could save lives and prevent injuries.

FSA would also like to emphasize caution when children are near farm equipment. Recent statistics reveal that annually over 30,000 farm injuries involve children under the age of 20. In agriculture today over 2 million youth are directly exposed to farm activity in some manner. As responsible adults we owe it to our families to practice safety at all times on the farm. Minimizing risk and exercising caution allows work on the farm to get done more efficiently and effectively. A fully successful summer harvest depends on getting the crop in, while insuring everyone remains safe and accident free.

## Marketing Assistance Loans, LDPs

Marketing assistance loans and loan deficiency payments can mean the difference between a good year and a not-so-good year. With that in mind, it is important to comply with the rules.

To be eligible for loans and LDPs, you must comply with the conservation and wetland protection requirements; report how you use cropland acreage on the farm and retain beneficial interest while the loan is outstanding; and ensure that the commodity meets CCC minimum grade and quality standards. Beneficial interest means you retain the ability to make decisions about the commodity and have title to the commodity. Once beneficial interest in a commodity is

lost, the commodity may be ineligible for loan or LDP even if you regain beneficial interest. For commodities to be eligible for loans or LDPs, they must have been produced by an eligible producer, be in existence and in a storable condition and be merchantable for food, feed or other uses as determined by CCC. The quantity of the commodity in farm storage must be maintained throughout the term of the loan. Loans mature 9 months after the month in which they are disbursed. Loans can be issued on commodities as soon as they are harvested. The final date to obtain Loans or LDP's is March 31, 2007 for small grains and May 31, 2007 for feed grains.

**CAUTION**  
*Farm Safety Involves Everyone*

## Linkage Requirement for Crop Disaster Program

If you received disaster benefits on an insurable crop that you did not have insured, or on a non-insurable crop that you did not carry Non-Insurable Crop Disaster Assistance (NAP) coverage on you are required to purchase insurance (greater than CAT) or NAP, as applicable on that crop for the next 2 available crop years.

Sales closing dates are fast approaching for both Insurance coverage and NAP coverage. For NAP coverage obtained from your local FSA Office the

following application closing dates are:

September 30th for small grains including winter wheat, rye, fall barley, fall speltz, fall mint, and forage (production); November 20th for apples, apricots, asparagus, blueberries, sweet & tart cherries, cranberries, grapes, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums, raspberries, rhubarb, and strawberries; December 1st for honey and maple sap.

There is a service fee of \$100.00 per crop per administrative county; or \$300.00 per producer per administrative

county not to exceed a total of \$900.00 per producer. This fee must be paid each year no later than the application closing date to remain eligible for your disaster payments.

Contact your local FSA office for more information and application closing dates for your specific crops. For crops that are insurable in your specific county contact your insurance agent for sales closing dates or your local FSA office for a list of agents that service your county.

## Loans Specially Designed for Beginning Farmers

FSA provides direct and guaranteed loans to beginning farmers who are unable to obtain financing from commercial credit sources. Each fiscal year, the Agency targets a portion of its direct and guaranteed farm ownership (FO) and operating loan (OL) funds to beginning farmers.

A beginning farmer or rancher is an individual or entity who (1) has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years; (2) meets the loan eligibility requirements of the program to which he/she is applying; (3) substantially participates in the operation; and (4) for FO purposes, does not own a farm greater than 30 percent of the average size farm in the county. (Note: all applicants for direct FO loans must have participated in business operation of a farm for at least 3 years.) If the applicant is an entity, all members must be related by blood or marriage, and all stockholders in a corporation must be eligible beginning farmers.

FSA has a special down payment FO loan program to assist beginning farmers and ranchers to purchase a farm. This program also provides a means for retiring farmers to transfer their land to a future generation.

If you are a beginning farmer and in need of financing, please contact your local FSA office.

## CCC-633 EZ, "LDP Agreement and Request"

The CCC-633EZ was developed to encompass field-direct LDP's, basic LDP's, wool, mohair, and unshorn pelts. Page 1 of the form contains the Terms and Conditions. Subsequent pages are requests for LDP's.

### Page 1 must be:

Completed by the producer and submitted to the County Service Center before losing beneficial interest in the commodity. Received in the County Service Center on or before any subsequent CCC-633EZ pages are submitted for payment.

Submitted before the final loan/LDP availability period.

### Subsequent pages:

Page 2 is for all harvested commodities

Page 4 is for wool, mohair, and unshorn pelts

## Moving to GIS

Three little letters are having a big effect at the county office and on the farm these days. Those letters are G-I-S, and they stand for Geographic Information System. GIS is a computer-based tool for capturing, storing, mapping and analyzing geographic information.

The Farm Service Agency has adopted GIS to replace the old system of hard copy maps and aerial photographs. It is faster and more accurate than the old system, and will save taxpayers money over the long term.

Here's how GIS works. We start with up-to-date aerial photographs of the entire county. These photographs are scanned so they can be stored in the computer. The photos become the base layer of the GIS. Technicians examine the photos and identify individual farms. They then outline each farm field, creating another layer of data called the Common Land Unit.

The software stores the shape of the field as a "polygon," and ties it to a specific location using latitude and longitude. The software also automatically — and very accurately — calculates the size of the field. The CLU layer will be connected to a database that contains information about the cropping history for that particular field.

GIS gives us the tools to provide quicker, more accurate information to producers and reduce the amount of time the producer must spend in the office to participate in USDA programs. As an added bonus, producers will be able to review their farm's GIS files online from the comfort of their homes.

## Lock-In Rates Available for CCC Loans

Producers have the ability to lock-in the posted county price (PCP) on commodity loans when the (PCP) is below the county loan rate or less than the loan rate plus interest due. Lock-in rates are good for 60 days or up to 14 days prior to the loan maturity. Bushels may only have a lock-in rate established one time. Producers will need to complete a CCC-697 to lock-in a payment rate for a CCC Loan. Reminder, a CCC-697 does not authorize the removal of loan grain from on farm storage. Producers will still be required to obtain a Marketing Authorization (CCC-681-1) before moving grain from the farm. Please contact your local FSA County Office for additional information.

**2007 Program Year:** Sign up for the 2007 DCP begins on October 1, 2006. When updating the 2007 contract, you may elect to receive your advance direct payment at any time from December 2006 through September 2007. You may also elect to receive advances on the counter-cyclical payment as follows: You may elect to receive 35% of the projected payment rate to be paid on or after October 2007 and/or you may elect to receive 70% of the projected payment rate already issued for the covered commodity, to be paid after February 1, 2008. Remember Counter-cyclical payments are authorized only when the



effective price for a commodity falls below the target price.

Before advance payments can be made you will need the owner's signature, if the owner is receiving a share of the payment. If the owner is not receiving a share you must provide a signed rental agreement (i.e. cash lease) from the owner(s) effective for the 2007 crop year, or the owner can sign for zero shares on the DCP contract.

If you are making any changes whether it is the land you are renting, ownership of a farm or a change in your Farming Operation you will need to contact our local FSA Office.

## CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE

**Any person who is convicted under federal or state law of 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.**

## Payment Eligibility and Limitation

For most programs administered through FSA, the individual, entity, or entity member is not eligible to receive program benefits if the average adjusted gross income exceeds \$2.5 million and less than 75% of the average adjusted gross income is derived from farming, ranching or forestry operations. USDA payments and benefits are subject to payment eligibility such as "actively engaged in farming" requirements; cash-rent tenant rule; permitted entity restriction; foreign person rule; average adjusted gross income limitation and payment limitation provisions.

Although annual filings are not required, documents used to determine eligibility are reviewed annually. It is

each participant's responsibility to timely notify the County Office by filing revised farm operating plans and/or supporting documentation, as applicable. Failure to do so may adversely affect eligibility and/or limitation. These changes may include renting a new farm, giving up a farm, buying or selling land or other changes. In addition, entities such as corporations, limited liability companies, trusts and estates are required to provide names, address, and ID number of members and notify FSA of interests as of April 1 and whenever member interests change.

Following are programs requiring payment eligibility or limitation determination, including the maximum payment limitation:

Commodity(s)/Crop(s)	Program/Payment Type	Program Year Limitation
Wheat, barley, oats, corn, grain sorghum, soybeans, minor oilseeds	Direct and Counter Cyclical Programs (DCP), direct payment	\$40,000
	DCP counter-cyclical payments	\$65,000
	Loan Deficiency Payment & Market Gains	\$75,000
Wool, mohair, and honey		\$75,000
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)		\$50,000
Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)		\$100,000
Trade Adjustment Act (TAA)		\$10,000 (may be adjusted downward if DCP counter-cyclical payment are received)
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)		\$450,000 in aggregate for all contracts for FY 2002-2007
Tree Assistance Program (TAP)		\$75,000

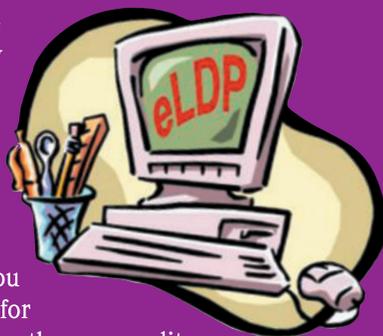
## eLDP's Service Available

Producers who are connected to the Internet can now stay home and apply for an Electronic Loan Deficiency Payment, or eLDP, for stored grain 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The producers will receive approval and payment by direct deposit within 48 hours.

To participate in the new service, you must meet all eligibility requirements for marketing assistance loans and LDPs for the commodity. A customer profile must be on file at the county office.

You must have an active USDA eAuthentication Level 2 account, which requires filling out an online registration form at <http://www.eauth.egov.usda.gov/>, followed by a visit to the county office for identity verification.

You must have an e-mail address, direct deposit and set up a customer profile through the county Farm Service Agency office. The voluntary eLDP service has stringent security measures to protect your private information.



## FSA Targets Funds for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers (SDA)

This special financing program is available for those who are part of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because their identity as members of the group without regard to their individual qualities. SDA members include women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian and Pacific Islanders.

SDA loan applicants do not receive automatic approval. Individuals must be U.S. citizens with a satisfactory credit history; have sufficient education, training or experience managing or operating a farm; possess the legal capacity or incur debt; and be able to obtain credit elsewhere. A positive cash flow and adequate security are also required. Other criteria may also apply.

For more information on this special program, please contact your local Farm Loan Manager.



## Does Your Operation Need Additional Grain Storage? Michigan FSA Offers Farm Storage Facility Program

Under the Farm Storage Facility Program, the Farm Service Agency makes loans to grain producers to build or upgrade farm storage and handling facilities. Loans may be made for the purchase and installation of eligible storage facilities, permanently affixed drying or handling equipment, or remodeling existing facilities. The maximum term of the loan is 7 years, and loans bear interest at the rate charged on U.S. Treasury securities of comparable maturity on the date the loan is approved. The interest rate for each loan will remain in effect for the term of the loan.

## Conservation Compliance Reminder

All participants in USDA programs are required to have a conservation system in place on all the highly erodible land that they operate. Several areas where problems can arise with complying with a conservation system are: renting new cropland, purchasing new cropland, breaking out additional cropland, shortening an established cropping rotation, planting new crops, and changing or removing existing conservation practices. It is very important that you contact the FSA office BEFORE doing any of the above. Also, it is very important that you contact your local County office BEFORE modifying (tiling, draining, dredging, filling or leveling) any wetland or drainage ditch. Failure to obtain advance approval for any of these situations can result in loss of all Federal payments and program eligibility.

## Signature Authority Requirements

County Offices are required to verify that a signature authority is on file in the county office before accepting a signature on any program or related documents on behalf of another.

Producers can present evidence of signature of authority such as presentation of the original document, corporate charter, bylaws, court orders of appointment, trust agreement, last will and testament, or articles of partnership.

The FSA-211, Power-of Attorney form can also be completed to grant signature authority to another individual or entity.

Spouses may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA

and CCC programs in which either has an interest, unless written notification denying a spouse this authority has been provided to the county office. This procedure does not apply to the commodity loan or Loan Deficiency Program. Spouses must have an FSA-211 on file to sign commodity loan documents on behalf of each other.

Spouses may not sign FSA-211 on behalf of the other as an authorized signatory for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations or other similar entities.

Producers need to contact their local county office for specific signature authority documents needed.

## Changes to Beneficial Interest Policy

The policy on beneficial interest has been amended. Listed below is a summary of some of the changes, but detailed information may be obtained from your local County Service Center.

**Open Storage.** The State Law in Michigan indicates that a commodity may remain in “open storage” for a maximum of 30 days. On the 31st day the grain will automatically be converted to a Price Later Agreement (PLA), if the producer does not enter into a PLA prior to the 31st day. Producers who deliver to a Commodity Credit Corporation-approved warehouse will lose beneficial interest in the commodity on the day it is converted to a PLA.

**Unapproved Facilities.** Producers who deliver commodities to a facility where the commodity is commingled with commodities from other producers are ineligible for a marketing assistance loan or loan deficiency payment, if the facility is not authorized by State or Federal law to store such commodities for the benefit of producers. Therefore, delivery of commodities to a location that is not considered a CCC-approved or State or Federally licensed facility will result in the loss of beneficial interest in the commodity on the date of physical delivery.

Deliveries of a commodity to entities such as a dairy, feedlot, pit, ethanol plant, wool pool, feed mill, or any other unapproved storage facility, will result in the loss of beneficial interest on the date of delivery, regardless of any other action or agreement between such an entity and the producer.

**Seed and Hybrid Seed Contract Producers.** Commodities produced under a contract in which the title to the seed remains with the entity and the entity provides the seed to the producer, including contracts for the production of hybrid seed and other specialty seeds, are eligible to be pledged as collateral for a MAL and/or LDP. Beneficial interest in the commodity will be considered lost the earlier of the date a payment is received for the commodity or the commodity is delivered to the contract company.

**Purchased Commodity.** A person who purchases or otherwise acquires a commodity from a producer under any circumstances does not have beneficial interest in the commodity regardless if the purchase or acquisition is made before or after the harvest of the commodity. However, CCC will consider a person to have beneficial interest in the commodity if, before harvest, the person has obtained title to the growing commodity and the risk of producing the commodity at the same time title was obtained for the land on which the commodity was growing.

**Deceased Producer.** Upon the death of a producer, CCC will consider an estate, heirs of the deceased producer or a person to whom title to a commodity has passed by state law, to have beneficial interest in a commodity produced by the deceased producer. The same terms and conditions that would have been applicable to the deceased producer will be applicable to the assumed producer.

In Farm Service Agency dialect, farms are constituted to group all tracts having the same owner and the same operator under one farm serial number. When ownership of land changes and the land no longer meets the definition of a farm or the operation of the farm changes, a farm reconstitution is required. Reconstitution is the process of combining or dividing farms or tracts of land based on the farming operation.

To be effective for the current year, recons must be requested by August 1 for farms enrolled in the Direct and Counter-cyclical Program. If current year DCP direct payments have already been issued on the farm, the reconstitution will be effective for the next year. However if the producer requests that the reconstitution be processed in the current fiscal year, all payments shall be refunded. After the payment is refunded, the reconstitution may be processed.

### Unauthorized Disposition

If loan grain has been disposed of through feeding, selling or any other form of disposal without county office approval, it is considered unauthorized disposition. The financial penalties are severe and a producer's name will be placed on a loan violation list for a two-year period. Always call the office before any loan grain is fed or sold.

### Security Guidelines

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has released a booklet entitled “Pre-Harvest Security Guidelines and Checklist 2006” to help agricultural producers enhance security at the farm level. The booklet contains practical measures that help to protect against natural disasters, as well as the unintentional or intentional introduction of plant or animal diseases. To get a copy, stop by the county office. More information is available at <http://www.usda.gov/homelandsecurity>.

### Special Accommodations

**Will be made upon request for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment.**

**If accommodations are required, individuals should contact their local FSA County Office.**

## Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)

NAP provides financial assistance to eligible producers affected by an eligible cause of loss such as damaging weather, adverse natural occurrences, or a condition related to damaging weather or adverse natural occurrence. Eligible crops include commercial crops and other agricultural commodities produced for food (including livestock feed) or fiber for which the catastrophic level of crop insurance is not available. NAP covers losses greater than 50% of your expected production at 55% of the average market price.

### How to apply?

Eligible producers must file CCC-471 (Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance (NAP) Application for Coverage) in the FSA administrative office serving the county or counties where their acreage is located no later than the application closing date established by the State.

### What does it cost?

Producers shall pay a nonrefundable service fee in the amount of \$100 per crop per administrative county; or \$300 per producer per administrative county not to exceed a total of \$900 per producer.

### Deadline:

The application and service fee must be filed by the application closing date for the crop. There are various application closing dates

throughout the year.

Three application closing dates coming up soon are September 30th for small grains including winter wheat, rye, fall barley, fall speltz, fall mint, and forage (production); November 20th for apples, apricots, asparagus, blueberries, sweet & tart cherries, cranberries, grapes, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums, raspberries, rhubarb, and strawberries; December 1st for honey and maple sap. Contact your local County FSA Office for the application closing date(s) specific to crops you are growing. Coverage cannot begin until 30 days after the coverage is purchased and the crop is planted.

### Crop Reporting:

To remain eligible for NAP, you must annually report the crop including: type and variety, crop location, producer shares, date the crop was planted, type of practice used and intended use (fresh, processed, etc.). Once harvested, the production must be reported.

### What if the crop fails?

When a cover crop is affected by a disaster, you must notify your local FSA office by completing a Notice of Loss (CCC-576) within 15 calendar days after the natural disaster occurrence or the date the damage becomes apparent. Don't lose out on potential benefits by failing to notify FSA at the time of loss.

## Youth Loans Available

FSA can assist eligible rural youth with loans to establish and operate an income producing project in conjunction with 4-H, FFA or another supervised youth program. Youth loans can be used for any agricultural related enterprise such as crops, or the purchase of cattle or equipment.

To be eligible, the individual must be between the ages of 10 and 20, and must have the permission of their parents, and the recommendation and oversight of a project advisor. Maximum loan size is \$5,000.00

## Preventing Fraud Waste

The Farm Service Agency and Risk Management Agency are partners in preventing fraud, waste and abuse in the Federal Crop Insurance Program. FSA has been, and will continue to assist RMA and insurance providers by monitoring crop conditions throughout the growing season. In addition, FSA will refer all suspected cases of fraud, waste and abuse to RMA.

Producers can report suspected cases to the local FSA county office staff, RMA or the Office of the Inspector General.



## Real Estate For Sale

The **FSA REAL ESTATE FOR SALE WEB SITE** provides an online guide to

Government-owned real estate and potential foreclosure sales information, which includes farm/ranch properties, houses, lots, and buildings. This site provides access to detailed information about each of the properties and links to other USDA web sites providing a variety of services. The site can be found at:

[www.resales.usda.gov](http://www.resales.usda.gov)

## Foreign Buyers Notification

Foreign investors, who buy, sell or hold a direct or indirect interest in U.S. agriculture land must report their holdings and transactions to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. The reporting requirement became law in 1978 when the Agricultural Foreign Investment Discloser Act (AFIDA) was signed into law.

Failure to timely file an accurate report within 90 days of the transaction to their local Farm Service Agency office can result in a penalty with fines up to 25 percent of the fair market value of the agricultural land.

## Farm Loan Programs Borrowers on Active Duty!

FSA is committed to providing service above and beyond the normal scope of daily servicing to Farm Loan Program borrowers who are impacted by military deployments. This includes regular military personnel, and National Guard and Reservist borrowers who are called to active duty. These individuals may be entitled to additional servicing options under the Service Members Act and the National Defense Act. In brief, the National Defense Act provides for non-accrual of interest and deferral of payments for borrowers who are on active duty during war or a national emergency.

Borrowers who may be impacted by these provisions are encouraged to contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager for additional details.

## Toll-Free Telephone Number for Direct Loan Borrowers

FSA direct loan borrowers are able to check the status of their accounts any time, day or night, using our new toll-free telephone number, 1-888-518-4983.

The system is function in both English and Spanish.

The system provides valuable information, including,

Unpaid principal, due date and amount of next scheduled installment, date last payment was received, amount of interest paid in this and last calendar year.

**Give it a try, 1-888-518-4983.**

**Dates to Remember**

- October 1, 2006:**  
 Sign up for 2007 Direct and Counter Cyclical Program begins
- October 9, 2006:**  
 Offices closed for Columbus Day
- November 3, 2006:**  
 Ballots mailed to eligible producers
- November 10, 2006:**  
 Offices closed for Veterans Day
- November 20, 2006:**  
 NAP Application closing date for apples, apricots, asparagus, blueberries, sweet & tart cherries, cranberries, grapes, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums, raspberries, rhubarb, and strawberries.
- November 23, 2006:**  
 Offices closed for Thanksgiving Day
- December 1, 2006:**  
 NAP Application closing date for honey and maple sap

**Customer Statement Now Online!**

The Farm Service Agency has launched a new Web tool to help producers track their participation in farm programs. The new Customer Statement allows producers to view participation and application status for conservation programs, program payments, farm loan information, and more.

Access to the Customer Statement is available to all USDA customers. In order to insure personal identity, producers must first register on line for a USDA Level 2 Account. The online process creates a user ID and password confirming an email address. The account will be an important identifier as USDA begins to link more customer data from agencies across the department.

To view a Customer Statement, visit

[www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov) and click on the Customer Statement button.

**Why is eFile Important?**

**Convenience-** The Internet allows you access to information 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. For example, you can fill out and submit electronic forms (eforms) any time of the day or night from your home or office.

**Faster Processing-** This new service delivery option allows you to complete and file your own forms or applications online.

**Identity Security-**

Information submitted to the Federal government remains safe and secure because you have a unique User ID and password and only authorized USDA employees can access your information.



**Bank Account Changes?**

As of January 1, 1999, all FSA payments are supposed to be electronically transferred into your bank account. In order to make timely payments, you need to notify the office if you close your account or if another financial institution purchases your bank. Payments can be delayed if we are not aware of changes to your account and routing numbers.