UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Farm Service Agency Washington, DC 20250 Notice AO-1643

For: State Offices and Service Centers

COC SDA Voting Member and COC Advisor Appointments

Approved by: Deputy Administrator, Field Operations

1 Overview

A Background

COC SDA-appointed voting members are needed to be a voice for COC for SDA farmers and ranchers when COC's have not achieved fair representation through the election process. The appointment authority granted by Pub. L. 107-171 (2002 Farm Bill), Section 10708, is exercised to ensure that COC members reflect the diverse interests of their communities. The authority to appoint members to 1-year terms to achieve fair representation is applied to COC's identified as needing an SDA member for fair representation, if an SDA member was **not** elected through the normal election process during any of the previous 4 election cycles.

An analysis by the National Office determined the counties in which the percentage of SDA producers indicates there is a need for increased SDA representation. SDA voting member appointments are required in 89 counties in 29 States for the 2016 COC. If a county was identified for an SDA appointment on the 2015 COC, but is not listed on Exhibit 1, then an SDA appointment is no longer required and there will be no SDA appointment to the 2016 COC in this county.

Only one SDA appointment is allowed for each identified COC. For counties or multi-county jurisdictions with multiple SDA groups, the appointments will be recommended based on the primary SDA group, which is the group with the highest share of producers in a particular county or multi-county jurisdiction. Counties with an SDA voting member appointment cannot also have an advisor representing the same SDA group as the appointed SDA voting member.

Disposal Date	Distribution
July 1, 2016	State Offices; State Offices relay to Service Centers

1 Overview (Continued)

B Purpose

This notice provides guidance to State Offices and Service Centers on the process and timelines for:

- appointing 1 additional SDA voting member on COC's identified as needing SDA representation
- appointing COC advisors where there are **no** elected or appointed SDA members.

Note: For guidance on the SDA voting member and COC advisor appointments, see 16-AO.

Dates in this notice supersede dates in 15-AO and 16-AO.

C COC's Identified as Needing SDA Representation

For data analysis, the categories of race and ethnicity were evaluated separately from gender. COC jurisdictions were identified as needing SDA representation based on the demographics of the entire COC jurisdiction. In COC jurisdictions with multiple SDA groups, the appointments are recommended based on the SDA group with the highest share of producers in the COC jurisdiction as indicated by the Census of Agriculture. The analysis for gender was based on the number of farms where a female was listed as the primary operator.

Exhibit 1 provides a list of COC jurisdictions identified as needing an SDA member for fair representation, if an SDA member was not elected in the 2015 election by the following:

- State
- county
- SDA COC appointment required for the following underrepresented groups:
 - African American or black
 - American Indian or Alaska Native
 - female
 - Hispanic or Latino.

D Contacts

If there are questions about this notice, contact either the following.

IF located in a	THEN contact
Service Center	the State Office.
State Office	Jean Knight, DAFO, at 202-720-0067.

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2 Appointing SDA COC Members

A Appointment Process and Timeline

STC shall require COC's identified as requiring an appointment in Exhibit 1 to solicit candidates and recommend an SDA member from the primary SDA group. States shall notify DAFO if a county on this list has elected an SDA candidate in the 2015 election and the requirement will be removed.

The process for obtaining candidate nominations and submitting to the Secretary will adhere to the following timeline.

- **February 1, 2016**, outreach for eligible SDA candidates begins (Exhibits 2 and 3).
- **February 12, 2016**, final date to accept candidate FSA-669A-2's from any LAA in the COC jurisdiction (Exhibit 4). Ensure that the **date-stamped** Nomination form is completely filled out with the required information from the nominee and the County Office.
- **February 19, 2016**, final date to submit all eligible candidate FSA-669A-2's received to STC, with a recommendation and written justification from COC for the candidate of choice.
- **February 26, 2016**, final date for the names and Race, Ethnicity, and Gender (REG) of the candidate tentatively chosen by STC to be provided to the Secretary through DAFO.

SDA voting member appointments will become effective no earlier than March 1, 2016.

State Offices will be notified when candidate appointments have been approved by the Secretary.

Note: COC's that have an appointed SDA voting member have met the requirement to have an SDA member serving on COC. No advisor appointments representing the same SDA group will be made in counties that have an appointed SDA voting member.

2 Appointing SDA COC Members (Continued)

B COC Action

COC's in Exhibit 1, indicating a need for a REG appointment, shall do the following.

Step	Action
1	Contact each SDA group and community-based organization that represents producers who are underrepresented on COC and provide them with FSA-669A-2 (Exhibit 4).
	Notes: The SDA groups shall be encouraged to offer candidates who are:
	willing and eligible to serve as COC members
	Note: Candidates for appointment must meet the same eligibility requirements as candidates for election according to 15-AO. LAA restrictions within COC jurisdiction do not apply.
	interested and active in farming in the COC jurisdiction.
	Notes: CED and COC shall make personal contacts with group leaders and community-based organizations, to ensure that the duties and responsibilities of COC and the eligibility requirements to serve are understood.
	Document contacts by COC and CED in the COC minutes.
	The SDA groups must be notified of the opportunity to nominate an SDA voting member, even if COC currently has either of the following, an:
	advisor recommendation
	• appointed SDA voting member whose term expires February 28, 2016.
2	Solicit candidate nominations through February 12, 2016 , from any LAA within the COC jurisdiction for COC SDA appointed members with emphasis on the primary underrepresented group.
3	Review all candidate nominations and determine eligibility to serve based on eligibility to serve requirements in 15-AO.
4	Make a determination of the candidate to be recommended to STC for COC SDA-appointed member, to ensure that the interests of SDA farmers and ranchers are fairly represented, and provide a written justification for why the recommendation of this individual is being made.
5	By February 19, 2016 , electronically provide the following to STC:
	 all eligible candidate FSA-669A-2's COC's recommendation and justification for COC SDA appointed member.

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2 Appointing SDA COC Members (Continued)

C STC Candidate Selection

STC shall:

- review all candidate nominations and concur with eligibility to serve, as required by 15-AO
- send candidate FSA-669A-2's, COC recommendations and STC recommendation (memo format signed by STC chair or SED) for COC SDA-appointed members by
 February 26, 2016, to Jean Knight by either of the following:
 - e-mail to jean.knight@wdc.usda.gov
 - FAX at 202-260-8720.

All candidates and STC recommendations will be submitted to the Secretary, who will make the final selection of COC SDA-appointed members. Members will be appointed to meet the fair representational needs for REG, as necessary. Priority will be given to the primary SDA group. An appointment from other SDA groups will only be made if there are **no** nominations from the primary group. Appointments based on gender, if indicated, will only be made if race and ethnicity needs have already been met.

DAFO will provide notification through STC to COC's of the names of individuals chosen for appointment by the Secretary, when available.

3 COC SDA-Appointed Members

A Newly Appointed SDA Members

Newly appointed SDA members are full voting COC members and shall:

- receive the same basic orientation and training course as elected COC members after appointment
- receive FSA-332A or FSA-332A(SP) (16-AO, Exhibit 15) that describes the duties of COC members
- take an oath of office on FSA-586
- receive the same stipend for their time and travel at the same rates as elected COC members.

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3 COC SDA-Appointed Members (Continued)

B Length of Term

The appointment shall be:

- for no longer then a 12-month period, and not to exceed 9 consecutive years of appointments
- effective on or about March 1 of each year.

C COC SDA-Appointed Member Duties

COC SDA-appointed members have full voting rights and the same responsibilities and duties as elected COC members as provided in 16-AO, paragraph 136. In addition, COC SDA-appointed members are expected to be in the forefront of COC actions such as:

- increasing awareness of and participation in FSA programs and activities, including elections by eligible voters, to ensure that SDA group problems and viewpoints are understood and considered in FSA actions
- helping to develop interest in SDA group members for considering FSA work as a career
- if not running for COC election themselves, actively soliciting candidates from SDA groups for nomination during the election process.

Counties for COC Jurisdictions Identified as Needing an Appointed SDA Member

The following table lists counties for all COC jurisdictions identified as needing an SDA member for fair representation by:

- State
- county
- SDA COC appointment required.

State	County Office	SDA COC Appointment Required
Alabama	Russell	Black
Alaska	Northern	Female
Arizona	Graham	American Indian
Colorado	Dolores	Female
Colorado	Fremont	Female
Colorado	La Plata	Hispanic
Connecticut	New London	Female
Florida	Gilchrist	Hispanic
Florida	Jefferson	Female
Florida	Marion	Female
Georgia	Dodge	Female
Georgia	Early	Black
Georgia	Henry	Female
Georgia	Jackson	Female
Georgia	Lamar	Female
Georgia	Lowndes	Black
Georgia	Miller	Black
Georgia	Randolph	Female
Idaho	Benewah	American Indian
Illinois	Kane-DuPage	Female
Louisiana	Natchitoches	Black
Louisiana	Red River-De Soto	Black
Louisiana	St Landry	Black
Louisiana	Tangipahoa	Black
Maryland	Prince Georges	Female
Massachusetts	Berkshire	Female
Michigan	Antrim	Female
Michigan	Newaygo	Female

Counties for COC Jurisdictions Identified as Needing an Appointed SDA Member (Continued)

State	County Office	SDA COC Appointment Required
Mississippi	Adams	Black
Mississippi	Forrest	Female
Mississippi	Grenada	Female
Mississippi	Marshall	Black
Mississippi	Tate	Black
Montana	Flathead	American Indian
Montana	Missoula	American Indian
Montana	Phillips	American Indian
Nebraska	Thurston	American Indian
New York	Columbia	Female
New York	Monroe	Female
North Carolina	Bladen	Black
North Carolina	Caswell	Black
North Carolina	Gates	Black
North Carolina	Granville	Black
North Carolina	Lee	Female
North Carolina	Martin	Black
North Carolina	Northampton	Black
North Dakota	Benson	American Indian
Ohio	Athens	Female
Oklahoma	Major	Female
Oregon	Clackamas	Female
Oregon	Lane	Female
Pennsylvania	Bucks/Montgomery	Female
Pennsylvania	Washington	Female
South Carolina	Clarendon	Black
South Carolina	Dorchester	Black
South Carolina	Marion	Black
South Carolina	Orangeburg	Black
South Carolina	Sumter	Black
South Carolina	Williamsburg	Black
South Dakota	Hutchinson	American Indian

Counties for COC Jurisdictions Identified as Needing an Appointed SDA Member (Continued)

State	County Office	SDA COC Appointment Required	
Texas	Bee	Hispanic	
Texas	Bexar	Hispanic	
Texas	Brazoria	Hispanic	
Texas	Dickens	Hispanic	
Texas	Denton	Female	
Texas	Dimmit-Zavala	Hispanic	
Texas	El Paso-Hudspeth-Culberson	Female	
Texas	Gray-Roberts	Female	
Texas	Harris-Montgomery-Waller	Female	
Texas	Liberty-Hardin-Chambers	Hispanic	
Texas	Live Oak-McMullen	Hispanic	
Texas	Navarro	Hispanic	
Texas	Nueces	Hispanic	
Texas	Parker-Hood-Somervell-Palo Pinto	Female	
Texas	Polk-San Jacinto	Black	
Texas	Runnels	Hispanic	
Texas	San Patricio-Aransas	Hispanic	
Texas	Schleicher	Hispanic	
Texas	Willacy	Hispanic	
Virginia	Amelia	Female	
Virginia	Brunswick	Black	
Virginia	Chesapeake City	Female	
Virginia	Dinwiddie	Black	
Virginia	Greensville	Black	
Virginia	Hanover	Female	
Virginia	Isle of Wright	Female	
Virginia	Mecklenburg	Black	
Virginia	Southampton	Black	
Virginia	Sussex	Female	
Washington	Skagit	Female	

COC SDA Appointment Suggested Outreach Activities

The following are suggested outreach activities for COC SDA appointments.

- Prepare informational packet for distribution to local organizations with a cover letter explaining the new COC appointment process for SDA membership. Example template letter (Exhibit 3) is available for employee download and use from the DAFO Outreach SharePoint web site at https://sharepoint.fsa.usda.net/mgr/DAFO/Outreach/default.aspx.
- Arrange a meeting with all members of the local extension service office to provide the informational packet. Request assistance in identifying potential SDA appointment candidates for COC nomination.
- Arrange a meeting with local Government leadership to explain the intent of the Secretary to appoint
 an SDA representative to COC. Request their recommendation of a candidate who would meet
 appointment criteria.
- State Offices shall contact the State Department of Agriculture to arrange a conference call with State Agriculture officials to inform them of the new COC appointment process for SDA membership. Request assistance in identifying potential appointment nominees.
- Request time to meet with the representative leadership of the following types of organizations, within the community.
 - Executive Directors and/or Presidents and Boards of Directors of local agriculture support organizations including, but **not** limited to, the following:
 - stockman's organizations
 - grange chapters
 - Future Farmers of America
 - Farm Credit agencies
 - 4-H leader groups.
 - Executive Directors and Presidents of local community groups including, but **not** limited to, the following:
 - tribal or ethnic worker programs or advocacy groups
 - Chambers of Commerce
 - local Health and Human Service agencies
 - Economic Development offices.
- **Followup** with representatives contacted to determine whether there are any recommendations for candidates. Document the recommendations provided, the contact information, and any details about the candidates' ability to fulfill appointment criteria.
- Contact all identified candidates and schedule appointments to meet with them to discuss and gain their support for their nomination to COC. Obtain completed FSA-669A-2, if contact is agreeable.
- Finalize slate of SDA candidate nominees by **February 27, 2016**.

Example Letter for FSA COC Appointments To Be Used With Official County Office Letterhead

The following letter template is available for employee download and use from the DAFO Outreach SharePoint web site at https://sharepoint.fsa.usda.net/mgr/DAFO/Outreach/default.aspx.

[Insert Date]
[Insert Organization Name]
[Insert Contact Name]
[Insert Address]
[Insert City, State, ZIP Code]

Re: Farm Service Agency's County Committee Appointments

Dear [Insert Contact Name]:

FSA has announced that the Secretary of Agriculture will appoint eligible targeted underserved (referred to in statute as socially disadvantaged or SDA) farmers and ranchers to serve a role as a voting member of established County Committees (COC's). Targeted underserved groups are American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Hispanics, and Women. Authority to appoint the voting targeted underserved members was granted in the 2002 Farm Bill. The purpose of the law was to give the Secretary of Agriculture the power to create fair representation for targeted underserved farmers and ranchers.

Targeted underserved farmers and ranchers represent a large portion of the farm population in many jurisdictional areas, however in [insert name of county] County, a targeted underserved candidate was not elected to the committee in the annual voting process. The Secretary can now appoint a voting targeted underserved member from names nominated and submitted locally. The appointed member will serve for one year. Each year, a statistical analysis will be conducted to determine whether re-appointment of a targeted underserved member is necessary to provide a voice for all targeted underserved producers on the County Committee.

FSA is contacting groups and community-based organizations that represent producers who are underrepresented on COC to notify them of the opportunity to nominate a targeted underserved voting member on the [insert current year] COC in [insert name of the identified county] County. An FSA-669A-2, "Nomination Form for County FSA Committee SDA Appointment" is being provided for this purpose. Please make additional copies as needed. They are also available online at http://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov/eForms/welcomeAction.do?Home.

Please submit an eligible candidate for nomination. FSA-669A-2, "Nomination Form for County FSA Committee SDA Appointment" will be accepted in our office through [insert last date FSA-669A-2 can be accepted]. Candidates for appointment **must** meet the same eligibility requirements as candidates for election, **except** for the requirement to live in a specific LAA. Candidates may reside in any LAA within the COC jurisdiction for the position of COC SDA Voting Member. See the enclosed fact sheet on "Eligibility to Vote and Hold Office as a COC Member". [Enclose fact sheet.]

I will be happy to speak to your organization about this process and answer any questions. Feel free to contact me or our county outreach coordinator at [insert County Office telephone number]. Thank you in advance for your cooperation in serving our county's farmers.

Sincerely,

[Insert CED Name]

Enclosures

Example of FSA-669A-2

The following is an example of FSA-669A-2.

This form is available electronically.

Form Approved - OMB No. 0560-0229

FSA-669A-2 (12-23-15) U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE Farm Service Agency

NOMINATION FORM FOR COUNTY FSA COMMITTEE SDA APPOINTMENT

This form allows individuals to nominate themselves or any other person from an SDA group (see definition below) as a candidate for appointment to the County FSA Committee in those COC jurisdictions that have been identified by an annual statistical analysis as needing an SDA member for fair representation.

A Socially disadvantaged (SDA) Farmer or Rancher is a farmer or rancher who has been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudices because of their identity as a member of a group without regard to their individual qualities. This term means a farmer or rancher who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. Specifically, this is a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities. Those groups include African Americans, American Indians or Alaskan natives, Hispanics, Asians or Pacific Islanders, and women.

If additional forms are needed, this one may be copied or may be obtained at the County FSA Office or obtained electronically at http://www.sc.egov.usda.gov. Each form submitted must be:

- A. Limited to one nominee.
- B. Signed and dated by the nominee in Item 3. Nominee must sign if willing to have his/her name submitted as a candidate for the County FSA Committee appointment and agrees to serve if selected.
- C. Delivered to the County FSA Office or postmarked no later than February 12, 2016.

The County FSA Committee is responsible for reviewing each form to determine the eligibility of nominees. A person who is nominated on this form and is found ineligible will be so notified and have an opportunity to file a challenge.

Persons nominated should actively participate in the operation of a farm or ranch and be well qualified for committee work. A producer is eligible to be a County FSA committee member if the producer resides in the COC jurisdiction in which the producer is nominated as a candidate to serve and is eligible to vote.

This is a non-salary public service position. A small stipend is provided to offset expenses.

Federal regulations may prohibit County FSA Committee members from holding certain positions in some farm, commodity, and political organizations if such positions pose a conflict of interest with FSA duties. The positions include functional offices such as president, vice president, secretary, or treasurer; and positions on boards or executive committees. Conflict of interest restrictions also apply to employees, operators, managers, and majority owners of tobacco warehouses. Questions concerning eligibility should be directed to the County FSA Office.

The duties of County FSA Committee members include:

- A. Administering farm program activities conducted by the County FSA Office.
- B. Informing farmers of the purpose and provisions of the FSA programs.
- C. Keeping the State FSA Committee informed of LAA conditions.
- D. Monitoring changes in farm programs.
- Participating in county meetings as necessary.
- F. Performing other duties as assigned by the State FSA Committee

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USCA) prohibits discrimination against its outsioners, employees, and aggicants for employment on the beass of race, color, national origin, age, disability, say, gender identity, religion, regress, and where aggicable, political ballets, mental saleus, families or permits alselus, assuue orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any guide assistance gropping, or producted generation of the proposed generation of the producted producted by the Department. (Not all graphitised bases will agoly the all graphitised bases will graph the graphitise and such as a graphitised bases of the graphitised bases of the graphitised by the agoly the graphitised bases of the graphitised bases of

If you wish to the a Chri Rights program complaint of discrimination, complaint the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at https://www.escr.usda.gov/bomplaint_filting_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or cell (356) 532-2323 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your complaint complaint form or letter by med to U.S. Dispointent of Agriculture, Director, Office of Aquatication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Warnington, D.C. 20250-2410, by fex (202) 590-7442 or small at program.Intereguesta.

Example of FSA-669A-2 (Continued)

FSA-669A-2	U.S	. DEPARTMENT O	F AGRICULTURE		
(12-23-15)	0.0	Farm Service			
NOMINATION	FORM FOR	COUNTY FS/	A COMMITTEE SE	A APPOINTMEN	IT
NAME OF NOMINEE (Type or Print Nominee's Full Name)		TO BE COMPLETED BY COUNTY FSA OFFICE 4. INITIALS OF EMPLOYEE RECEIVING FORM AND DATE RECEIVED			
2. ADDRESS OF NOMINEE		5. COUNTY			
		6. LAA	7. STATE		
3. NOMINEE'S CERTIFICATION:			8. NOMINATOR'S CERT	FICATION:	
I hereby agree to have my name submitte County FSA Committee that I will serve, interest, I will resign such position.			representative of a commi	her than self, the following mity based organization h a candidate for County F	ereby nominates th
3A. SIGNATURE OF NOMINEE		3B. DATE	8A. SIGNATURE OF NOR	MINATOR	8B. DATE
		O DE COMPLET	(If the individual is sel	f nominating, no signa	ature is required
OLUNTARY INFORMATION FOR I			ED BY NOMINEE		
Hispanic or Latino Not Hispanic or Latino	American Indi	an or Alaska Native		nerican Other Pacific Islander	GENDER Male Female
Complete the form as follows: ITEM 1 Type or Print the nominee's A. Eligible to vote in th B. Eligible to hold the o C. Willing to serve if el	s full name. The note the designated Couperfice of County F	ominee must be:		RM	
G. Willing to serve if el					
ITEM 2 Enter the nominee's currer	nt address.				
ū					
ITEM 2 Enter the nominee's currer	t sign and date.	(If the individual i	s self nominating, no sign	nature is required.)	
ITEM 2 Enter the nominee's currer	t sign and date.	(If the individual i	s self nominating, no sign	nature is required.)	
ITEM 2 Enter the nominee's currer ITEMS 3A &3B The nominee mus	t sign and date. st sign and date. untary.				12, 2016.
ITEM 2 Enter the nominee's currer ITEMS 3A &3B The nominee mus ITEMS 8A & 8B The nominator mu ITEM 9 Completing this item is vol	at sign and date. Ist sign and date. Intary. RECEIVED IN TI Coordence with the Priv. Into the County FSA Covernmental entitles that It could be a factorial with management of the County for the County FSA Covernmental entitles that It can be a factorial with management of the County for the County FSA Covernmental entitles that It can be a factorial with management of the County FSA Co	HE COUNTY OF lacy Act of 1974 (6 US: L 113-79). The informa- ormatice. The informa- it have been authorized County Personnel Rec Journary, but necessary	FICE OR POSTMAR! C 552a - as amended). The autiation will be used to obtain norm tion collected on this from may it occus, USDA/FSA-6. Providing it for processing the form. Failure	KED BY FEBRUARY nority for requesting the inform inations from a socially disadia e disclosed to other Federal, atute or regulation and/or as d he nominee name, address, s) to furnish the nominee name.	ation identified on this antaged (SDA) group State, Local governme lescribed in applicable gnature/date, and , address, signature/da