

NEWS

FSA County Office Employee Testifies Before Congress

You never know what you're going to be asked to do for FSA. Holt County, Neb. program technician Ginny Haynes found this out in March when she got a call from Washington, D.C. Diane Sharp, Director of FSA's Production, Emergencies, and Compliance Division, asked her to come and testify before the House Agriculture Committee about disaster programs and the delays in getting emergency financial aid to farmers — four days hence. Secretary Glickman wanted testimony from a field employee who could give an accurate perspective of the county office workload.



Ginny Haynes

photo by Dann Stuart

It's not surprising that he called upon Haynes since her expertise in this area is well known, both in Nebraska and Washington, D.C. Haynes was the only county office representative on a disaster task force last December, working with the Risk Management Agency (RMA), state directors and employees, and Washington staff. She has worked in production adjustment/compliance for 15 years, so she knows first-hand the amount of work it takes to process applications.

So Haynes packed her bag and grabbed a flight to D.C. It was on the plane that it really sunk in about where she was going and what she was going to do when she got there. Testifying before the Congressional House Agriculture Committee was nerve-racking enough. Then add in the presence of several USDA leaders, all the way to Secretary Glickman (she sat next to him at the table in front of the Committee — just the two of them), and most people would be a little nervous. The absence of cameras calmed her nerves just a little.

Haynes detailed for the Committee the time involved in processing emergency applications. There are so many new programs available with fewer people to deliver them due to staff

cuts. But there are also other factors involved in the delays, she said. Part of the problem is the lack of a national database to share information among all USDA agencies. "With this program, FSA and RMA are exchanging data electronically for the first time," she said. Haynes also explained that there is often a disparity between trying to keep programs simple while ensuring that they remain fair and equitable for all producers. "This, along with limited FSA program funding, also slows down the payment process," she said.

Historically, it seems that Haynes is only the second person from an FSA field office to testify on Capitol Hill. But pro that she is, she wrote her own testimony and delivered it flawlessly. Haynes got the opportunity to meet Nebraska Congressman Bill Barrett, a member of the Committee, who told her that he and the Agriculture Committee appreciated the hard work of FSA's county office employees. Haynes said, "It's always nice to hear words of praise, especially from a member of Congress. It was a day I won't ever forget."

ADMINISTRATOR'S COLUMN

FSA Provides Food Aid Around the World

These days it's impossible to escape knowing about the plight of the Kosovar refugees. The evening news is full of images of the victims of ethnic cleansing. Newspapers document the appalling conditions under which many have been forced to live, and the nightmarish stories of their persecution. Thousands have died. More than 1.3 million people have been displaced from their homes, and the countries to which they have fled struggle to feed, clothe, and house them all. Many have lost almost everything — as their homes burned, they were forced to leave with little more than the clothes on their backs. And all of them face a frightening, uncertain future.

I've said before how much I admire the willingness of FSA employees to help people in need. Our people go in for public service in a big way. And I'm not just talking about on the job. They eagerly help with gleaning projects and local food banks. They don't hesitate to pitch in and help in emergencies like tornadoes or floods. They serve as tutors and mentors to disadvantaged youngsters. They help fix up

houses for disadvantaged seniors. I could go on. So it's no surprise that many want to know what can be done for the Balkan refugees.

I'm proud to say that FSA workers are already playing a vital role in America's efforts to ease the refugees' plight. FSA's Commodity Operations acts as the food purchasing agent for all of the Federal Government's food aid programs, using the authorities of the Commodity Credit Corporation. One example of our relief efforts is the 4.5 million metric tons of wheat Commodity Operations has purchased under the President's Wheat Initiative.

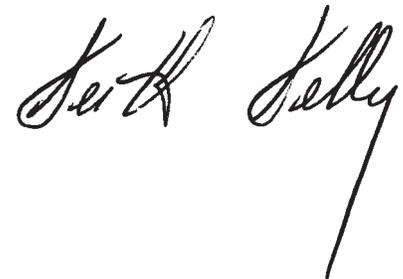
The purchased wheat is being donated under section 416(b) of the Agricultural Act of 1949, which is administered by the Foreign Agricultural Service, for use as humanitarian aid in the Balkans, North Korea, and other areas suffering food shortages. Of the wheat Commodity Operations has purchased, 100,000 metric tons will be exchanged for flour and bulgar, or coarsely ground wheat, and distributed in the Balkans through the World Food Program (WFP). Shipments are scheduled of 9,100 metric tons of flour per month from July through December.

Commodity Operations also purchased the grain being used for U.S. shipments of 15,000 metric tons of flour to the Balkans in April, May, and June. Those shipments are being made under the Food for Peace (Title II) program, which is administered by the United States Agency for International Development. In addition, 1,350 tons each of vegetable oil and navy beans, as well as other foodstuffs, are being donated. The food is being distributed through the United Nations' World Food Program and other private voluntary organizations, including the Catholic Relief Service and Mercy Corps, International.

In addition, Commodity Operations has purchased 100 tons of fortified high-protein emergency food ration biscuits, 51 tons of which were airlifted to Albania and Macedonia and are now being distributed to refugees from Kosovo. The balance of 49 tons is scheduled for delivery in mid-May. And also under the Food for Peace program, 400,000 metric tons of wheat and corn and 300 tons of nonfat milk powder are being shipped to alleviate hunger and malnutrition in famine-stricken North Korea.

That's just part of the effort FSA employees are making to fight hunger in the Balkans and around the world. But many are also asking if there's anything they can do on their own time. Well, as a matter of fact, there is. The many private relief organizations active in helping refugees are quickly running out of resources because of the heavy demand this crisis has placed on them. To help address this problem, President Clinton recently announced the establishment of a toll-free telephone hotline, 1-800-USAID-RELIEF. Through this number, you can be referred to a number of private relief organizations that need your help.

Whether you participate through this hotline or choose other means of helping those less fortunate, you'll be carrying on a proud FSA tradition.



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National Wildflower Week Is May 2-8



This photo shows a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) prairie mixture in eastern Iowa. Wildflowers can be part of an approved cover mix under the CRP's native grass practice. There are thousands of native wildflowers in the U.S., and they require little care because they're strong, hardy plants.

The primary benefit of wildflowers to agriculture? Bees, wasps, and hornets are attracted to the flowers, then pollinate soybeans and other crops in the area. Wildflowers also contribute to the food chain. As insects are drawn to the flowers, they attract birds, such as pheasants and quail, that feed on the insects. So, plant a little beauty that's helpful to agriculture!

Help Us Race for the Cure

by Anne Austin, USDA Race for the Cure Coordinator; and LeAndrea Alsobrook, Disability Employment Program Manager, Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services

On June 5, 1999, thousands of runners, walkers, and volunteers will come together at the Washington Monument to participate in the 10th annual *Race for the Cure* of breast cancer. This year we are hoping that USDA will have a larger representation registered for the race than ever before. The *Race for the Cure* is billed as the world's largest 5K. There is also a 1-mile fun walk and other activities scheduled for the day of the race, including a Survivors Parade and Post-Race Rally.

You may know a coworker or family member who is a breast cancer survi-

vor or who is currently fighting this disease. We encourage you to join in the *Race for the Cure* of this debilitating disease. You can obtain registration forms from Anne Austin, 202-418-8962; LeAndrea Alsobrook, 202-418-8982 (voice) or 202-418-9116 (TDD); Renee Chambers, 703-305-1447; or Jeffrey Peikin, 202-720-2341.

This year, the *Race for the Cure* is being held in 99 cities across the country with over 600,000 participants expected. To locate an event near you, check out the *Race for the Cure* website at <http://www.raceforthecure.com>



HONEY BEE FACTS:



- The queen bee lays 1,500 eggs a day.
- In one day, bees sip the nectar from 3 trillion flowers. They make 3,300 tons of honey, enough to cover a slice of toast as big as London.
- A bee's life:
 - The youngest workers clean the hive.
 - After 3 days they are promoted to feeding the larvae.
 - After 10 days their job is to build the comb.
 - After 16 days they start filling the comb with pollen and nectar.
 - After 20 days they guard the entrance of the hive.
 - Finally they leave the hive to gather nectar.
 - Bees live from a few weeks to a few months depending on the season.

Source: *The World in One Day*

FSA Employees Make a Difference

Can one person really make a big difference? Yes, and we have proof, as two of our own FSA coworkers received Secretary Glickman's first ever USDA People Making a Difference Award. The employees, both based in D.C., are Margaret Wright in Farm Programs and Bill Cobb in Farm Loan Programs.

The award was part of the March commemoration of Secretary Glickman's 4th anniversary with USDA. For the award, employees throughout USDA nominated coworkers who greatly contributed to the work of USDA. At a March 30 ceremony, the Secretary expressed his appreciation to all Department employees for their hard work and support of USDA programs. He praised the awardees and presented each of them with a certificate.

Margaret Wright, Price Support Specialist in Farm Programs' Price Support Division, was nominated by Joe Glauber, Deputy in USDA's Office of Chief Economist. In his nomination, Glauber explained that for three years Wright "performed exemplary public service in providing compensation for producers and handlers adversely affected by the Karnal bunt quarantine. The compensation effort has been an integral part of USDA's effort to contain the disease and protect the wheat industry without unduly restricting trade. Her involvement 'made the difference'



Margaret Wright and Secretary Glickman.



Bill Cobb and Secretary Glickman.

for many producers and handlers and has helped ensure cooperation with the regulatory effort." Wright said that receiving the award has been the highlight of her career. "As I am soon leaving D.C. and heading for the Colorado State FSA Office to work with price support and conservation, this award was a great finale," she said.

Since 1995, Bill Cobb has been Project Manager for the Farm Loan Programs' Business Process Reengineering Streamlining Project. This project is in line with the Vice President's initiative for plain language, reduction of paperwork burden for the public, and improved customer service. Deputy Administrator Carolyn Cooksie nominated Cobb. In her nomination, she praised Cobb for his ongoing expert work to rewrite, update, consolidate, or obsolete 2,000 pages from the Code of Federal Regulations, 4,000 pages of instructions, and over 400 forms. Cobb oversees 6 teams of National office and field office employees and an independent contractor involved in this effort. Cobb said he was honored to receive the award and thanks Cooksie for her support of the streamlining project. He also said, "This project wouldn't be possible without the dedication and expertise of the many National and field office employees involved."

Congratulations to both deserving employees!

Innovation in Loan Making

by Lee Marsh, Virginia State FSA Office Farm Loan Program Chief

The FSA Virginia Farm Loan Programs Staff is plowing new ground with a unique approach to the farm loan process. In November 1998, we set up a Loan Origination Team made up of CEDs and Program Technicians (PT) throughout the state. We established the team, with the approval of SED Donald Davis, because our state did not have enough loan officers to service farm loan accounts and process the volume of loan applications we were receiving.

We decided that the best way to handle this was to train a small number of county employees to process applications to the point of determining loan feasibility and approval or rejection. Then 1 of our 8 loan managers or 1 of 11 loan officers who have loan approval authority would complete the transaction. In the past, we provided training to all CEDs and a large number of PTs, but without the hands-on approach, the value of the training was being lost over time.

By having a small number of team members servicing a particular area — two per district in this case — our loan originators are exposed to enough applications to put their training to use and enhance their efficiency. This is a new concept for FSA, but it's similar to the industry standard used by mortgage lenders in the private sector who typically break down their loan makers into loan originators and loan processors.

Loan originators were nominated by District Directors and approved by the SED. The team went through a full week of intense "hand-on training," conducted by state office loan staff. The training included a visit to a farm to complete a farm assessment and develop a loan application file. Farm loan managers will keep team members up-to-date with followup training.

If this system works as well as expected, we plan to train another group of loan originators this year and, eventually, all Virginia offices will have a fully trained individual to process loan applications.

The National Office is interested in this system to see if it could be used nationwide. Loan Origination Teams will help enable FSA to continue to provide the highest quality of service to our loan applicants and borrowers.



SED Donald Davis and Farm Loan Programs Chief Lee Marsh, developer of the Loan Origination Team.



Virginia Loan Origination Team (left to right): Melanie Shull, Jodie Barnett, Doug Eastep, Bev Saville, Charles Ingram, David Berry, Joan Poore, Woodrow Wilson, H. L. Kellam, and Greg Spitzer. Not pictured: Martin Bomar, Ricky Hudgins, and Glen Pierce.

Getting Conservation on the Ground

by Larry Hill, CED, Phillips County, Mont.

Thanks to FSA cost-share assistance, cattle on Montana's Fort Belknap Indian Reservation can now quench their thirst from the reservation's new stockwater pits and wells. The tribe's producers worked with FSA offices in Blaine and Phillips Counties to make it happen.

The work started three years ago when Fort Belknap's Tribal Land Department completed an assessment of their range units and identified critical livestock water needs. Since the reservation lies in both Blaine and Phillips Counties, the tribe requested Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP) cost-share assistance in both coun-

ties. The two county committees approved the requests for stockwater pits and wells, serving a total of 14,000 acres of tribally-owned rangeland. The tribe then contracted with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Roads Department to complete work on the 24 pits and 3 wells.

In February, Larry Hill, Phillips County CED, presented Tribal Chairman Joe McConnell a \$13,000 final installment on the cost-share agreement. The Blaine County Office earlier issued the tribe \$15,000 in ACP funds. The tribe manages over 300,000 acres of rangeland and will continue to work with FSA to better utilize their resources.



Left to right: Joe McConnell, Tribal Chairman; Patty Addy, BIA Roads; Larry Hill, Phillips County CED; Tracy Harshman, Blaine County CED; and Ed Halver from the Tribal Land Department.

Grau Named Deputy Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services



On April 14, Secretary Glickman announced the appointment of Thomas L. Grau as Deputy Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, replacing Dallas Smith, who retired earlier this year. Grau will oversee FSA, Risk Management Agency, and Foreign Agricultural Service programs.

Prior to this appointment, Grau served for almost six years as FSA State Executive Director in Des Moines, Iowa. Before his USDA service, Grau held several key leadership posts in agriculture, including Chairman of the Iowa Corn Promotion Board and Chairman of the Board of the U.S. National Corn Development Foundation. He also represented U.S. agriculture on trade missions to Japan, China, Taiwan, and South Korea. In 1990, he participated in an agriculture exchange program with the former Soviet Union.

Grau has an extensive agricultural background. He was involved with a grain production farm and also worked for a major seed company in northwest Iowa for nearly 20 years.

Youth Loan Borrower Takes Top Prizes at County Fair

by Debra Bailey, Program Technician, Kern County FSA Office, Calif.

One of our rural youth loan borrowers, Megan Hudson, did a tremendous job last fall at our county fair in California. Megan, now a sixth grader, started raising Holsteins at age 9 through her involvement in 4H and with help from her aunt. She received a rural youth loan last year to help out with the cost.

At the Kern County Fair, Megan had three entries in the dairy section. With her yearling, Skipper, she won Best of Show: Registered Holsteins. Her second yearling, Dutch, won second place in the Summer Yearling Division.

Megan's main entry was her Springer heifer, Barbie. Megan entered Barbie in the showmanship competition where the kids are judged for their ability to show their animals. In the junior division (grades 4-8), Megan won first place and received a silver belt buckle. The showmanship judge then invited Megan to come back into the ring to compete in the senior class (grades 9-12). Megan won that competition as well and received a second belt buckle!

But the honors didn't end there. On show day, the day the top animals are judged, the top six heifers from each class, including Barbie, competed

against one another in the show of champions. Barbie won first prize as the Grand Champion Springer Heifer. For this honor, Megan received another belt buckle, a trophy, a pair of boots, a beautiful blanket, and other prizes. Megan says one of her proudest moments during the whole experience was meeting Attorney General and gubernatorial candidate Dan Lungren.

Since Barbie was chosen as the top heifer, on auction day Megan got the honor of going through the Junior Live-

stock Auction first. She sold Barbie for a handsome \$7,000. Her nice profit from the sale will enable Megan to pay for future dairy projects without the assistance of another youth loan.

We at the Kern County FSA Office are so proud of Megan for her outstanding job with her fair project and youth loan. Her experience has taught her valuable lessons in money management and business responsibility. It has really helped her to grow and inspired her to know that she can be successful in raising livestock.



Megan Hudson with her prize winning heifer, Barbie.



RICE FACTS:

- About 15,000 people in the U.S. produce rice.
- The average American eats 25 pounds of rice per year.
- During cooking, rice absorbs the liquid it is cooked in and expands to three times its original weight.
- Uncooked white rice can be stored indefinitely on the shelf in a tightly sealed container.
- Uncooked brown rice has a shelf life of 6 months.

Source: USA Rice Federation

Ohio Honors Century Farmer

by Michael Kaufman, Public Affairs Specialist, Ohio FSA State Office

Stark County, Ohio farmer, Earl Wenger, celebrated his 100th birthday with FSA staff at the local USDA Service Center in Canton, Ohio. In honor of Wenger's February 7th centennial birthday, office manager Barbara Stoll and staff members threw him a party. Wenger's sons Harold, age 74, and Kenneth, age 72 — who are still referred to as "Earl's boys"— also attended. SED Steven Maurer joined the festivities and congratulated Wenger for his longevity in agriculture on behalf of Secretary Glickman and USDA. Maurer proclaimed, "We have several century farms throughout Ohio, but very few century farmers." The day was rounded out with a phone call to Wenger from Under Secretary Schumacher.

Wenger, a past FSA program participant, breeds and exhibits Belgian horses and has judged draft horses for 20 years. He remains active around his 80-acre farm just outside Middlebranch, Ohio, tending to his dairy cows, hogs, and hens. Wenger is in good health and is looking forward to the next hundred years.



Earl Wenger with his sons Harold (left) and William (right). Stark County staff members provided the cake.



SED Steven Maurer congratulated Wenger on reaching the century mark.

Answers to April's Puzzle

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CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Date	Location	Event
May 2-8		National Wildflower Week
May 17-19	Greeley, Colo.	Parks Shackelford, Associate Administrator, to speak at the Midwest Private Lands Wildlife Management Group Meeting
May 28-29	Colorado Springs, Colo.	Vicki Hicks, Deputy Administrator for Commodity Operations, to speak at the American Cotton Shippers Association Annual Convention
May 31		Memorial Day

Note: The above is subject to change.