



May 11, 2004

The Hartley County Harvester

**Hartley County FSA
District 1**
PO Box 177
Hartley, TX 79044-0177

Voice: (806) 365-4453
FAX: (806) 365-4446

Hours:
Monday-Friday
8:00 AM – 4:30 PM

County Committee:
Joe Parker
Jason Schniederjan
Bud Snead

Minority Advisor:
Babette Spinhirne

Farm Program Staff:
Glen Clugy, CED
Becky Brown, PT
Becky Voight, PT

Farm Loan Staff:
(Dalhart Office)
Marc Lathem, FLM
Barbara Koch, PT

Regular Committee Meetings
held on the 3rd Wednesday of
each Month.

Dates to Remember

**May 17th – Final Day to
report small grain
acres**
**May 31st – Office Closed
for Memorial Day**
**July 15th – Final Day to
report spring &
summer seeded crops**

Texas FSA Staffing Significantly Reduced

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM JOHN T. FUSTON, STATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TEXAS FSA - Due to severe cuts to FSA's budget nationwide, states have had to make significant reductions to staff – Texas is no exception. Fiscal Year 2004 budget constraints left Texas FSA with no other choice but to terminate the vast majority of our temporary employees. As a result of these terminations, many county offices are suffering extreme staff shortages. What does this mean to you, the producer? It means that, at times, due to limited staffing, county offices may be closed during regular business hours. Office closures will only occur for extenuating circumstances such as staff training or illness and only when no alternative is available. Management will make every attempt to keep our doors open as Texas FSA remains committed to our proven track record of excellent customer service. In an attempt to prevent inconveniences for the producers we assist, we are recommending that you call ahead and schedule an appointment to conduct your business. An appointment will insure that we will be available to provide the quality, personal, efficient assistance you've come to expect from Texas FSA and we've taken pride in delivering. We thank you in advance for your patience and understanding and assure you we are working with the National Office to remedy the situation and prevent further cuts.

DCP Signup Continues

Signup for the Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP) continues. In order to avoid late filing fees, producers must update their contract before the June 1, 2004 deadline. Unlike the Production Flexibility Contract (PFC) program, this program requires you to sign contracts annually.

We can provide 50% of your direct payment now. However, before payments can be made, an approved contract, eligibility forms, and 2004 rental agreements, if applicable, must be on file.

Applications received after June 1, 2004 will be considered late-filed. Late-filed applications will be accepted through September 30, 2004, but will incur a \$100 late filing fee per farm. Producers also have the option of not participating in the DCP program for 2004. Any farm not enrolled in the 2004 DCP program will retain eligibility for the 2005 DCP program.

Small Grain Acreage Reports Due

All producers are reminded that May 17th is the final date to report your 2004 small grain acreages to this office. Spring and summer seeded crops do not have to be reported until July 15th. Producers participating in the DCP farm program are also reminded that all the acreage on their participating farms must be reported or the farm will be considered in violation.

Failure to report your small grain acreages by the May 17th deadline can cause late-filing penalties to be applied at \$35.00 for the first field plus \$15.00 for each additional field. So don't be late, make an appointment with this office to report your acreage before the deadline.

Weeds, Weeds, Weeds

All producers participating in CRP and the DCP Farm Program are reminded that weeds must be controlled on the enrolled acreage. Failure to timely and properly implement weed control measures on the land can result in a loss of all program payments for the year.

2003 Counter-Cyclical Payments

Due to crop prices, there will be no second advance 2003 counter-cyclical payment. Furthermore, producers who received partial payments from the initial wheat and corn advance counter-cyclical installments might have to repay the money if those advance payments exceed the final counter-cyclical payment amount for each respective commodity.

NAP Crops Following Small Grains

Crops following small grains shall be ineligible for NAP if any of the following apply:

- The crop is planted following small grains that have reached the heading stage in the same calendar year unless the acreage is irrigated or adequate measures are taken to terminate the small grain crop prior to heading and less than 50 percent of the small grain plants reach the heading stage.
- The crop is planted following small grain acreage that is non-irrigated and from which a hay crop was harvested (including a harvested small grain hay crop regardless of the percentage of small grain plants that reached the headed stage).
- The crop was grazed past the established pull-off date for the applicable small grain.

On the World Wide Web:

USDA Washington Office
www.usda.gov

FSA Washington Office
www.fsa.usda.gov

FSA Outreach
www.fsa.usda.gov/outreach

Texas State FSA Office
www.fsa.usda.gov/tx

Hartley FSA
www.fsa.usda.gov/tx/tx205



Experimental Crops Ineligible for NAP

The Texas FSA State Committee has determined that experimental crops shall NOT be eligible for the NAP program on the following:

- Non-irrigated crops – if the crop has not been successfully produced in the county for three (3) crop years in the base period (10 years – 1994 thru 2003).
- Irrigated crops – if the crop has not been successfully produced in the county for three (3) crop years in the base period (10 years – 1994 thru 2003) unless the County Committee can determine that a similar irrigated crop has been successfully produced in the county in the base period.

Planting Reminders

Under the Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP), there are no set-asides and no acreage restrictions for crops including corn, soybeans, oats or hay. The only exceptions are fruits and vegetables. Those crops cannot be planted on DCP base acres without the possibility of a penalty being assessed. Producers with a history of planting fruits or vegetables may use that history to plant the specific fruit or vegetable on base acres without violating the program. However, for each fruit or vegetable acre planted on contract acres, the farm's payments are reduced by an acre.

Highly Erodible Land (HEL)

Before you drop a plow in the ground, ask yourself if you know the residue requirements and cropping rotation for the field. If not, check the conservation plan you agreed to with NRCS. Violating Highly Erodible Land (HEL) rules can cost you all program benefits from the MILC, Direct and Counter-Cyclical, disaster or other federal farm programs.

Wetland Compliance

Land that is classified as a wet area and converted after November 28, 1990 is considered in violation of Swampbuster provisions of the Clean Water Act. Converted wetland violations retain violation status indefinitely or until the area is restored. Producers who purchase acreage with a converted wetland determination are not automatically in violation unless they plant an agricultural commodity on the converted ground. It is your responsibility to know the "history" of land you acquire to make sure you are in compliance.

If you are determined to be in violation of wetland provisions, you may lose USDA program benefits. For example, if a landowner produces a crop on a converted wetland, he or she may lose benefits for that year. Or, if you are a landowner and you convert a wetland after November 28, 1990, you may lose benefits for the year that the conversion took place, and for the years that follow, until the wetland functions and values are restored.

If you have any doubts, request an official wetland determination from NRCS before planting or making ANY changes to the land – this is particularly important to new owners/operators. Once a wetland or HEL planting violation occurs, it is too late. You will be ineligible for all USDA benefits.

Land Changes

If you have purchased land, sold land or are renting different land, make sure you report the changes to the FSA office after they occur. For farm ownership changes you will need to provide a recorded deed or recorded land contract.

Not "Actively Engaged" Determinations

Any producers determined to be "Not Actively Engaged in Farming" are ineligible for many USDA payments. This includes DCP, gains from marketing loans and loan deficiency payments and CRP annual rental payments as well as any other payment or benefit requiring a determination of "actively engaged in farming."

Spot Checks by FSA

All Farm Operating Plan for Payment Eligibility Review, are subject to spot check through our end-of-year review process. If selected for a spot check, producers will be asked to submit proof of their contributions to the operation such as seed, fertilizer and chemical bills, land lease agreements, land contracts or property tax payments, equipment lists, cancelled checks for paid labor or hired management and any other items the FSA County Committee determine are necessary.

The producer is required to provide these items for the spot check so that the FSA county committee can make a determination that the farming operation is actually being performed as was stated on the applicable Farm Operating Plan that was originally completed.

Customer Statement – New FSA Web-Based Tool

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 privacy and security, a producer must first register on line for a USDA ID. The online process creates a user ID and password confirming an email address. The ID will be an important identifier as USDA begins to link more customer data from agencies across the department.

To view a Customer Statement, visit <http://www.usda.gov> and click on the Customer Statement button. Please call us if we can be of assistance in utilizing this new tool.

Loan Rates

The 2004 Hartley County Loan Rates for eligible commodities pledged as collateral for a CCC loan are:

Commodity	Rate
Wheat, HRW	\$ 2.66 per bushel
Oats (per bushel)	\$ 1.43 per bushel
Barley (per bushel)	\$ 1.88 per bushel
Cotton	\$.516 per pound*
Corn (per bushel)	\$ 2.26 per bushel
Sorghum	\$ 3.67 per cwt.
Soybeans	\$ 4.64 per bushel
Sunflowers	\$ 8.87 per cwt.
* based on storage location, actual rate may be different	

Holiday

This office will be closed on Monday, May 31st for Memorial Day and will reopen on June 1st at 8:00 a.m.

If you have any questions about this newsletter or any FSA program, please come by this office or call us at (806) 365-4453 extension 2