

July 2019



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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SED's Comments

The U.S. Congress recently passed a disaster relief bill which will benefit Hawaii & Pacific Basin producers who had severe crop loss resulting from the eight Presidential declared disasters that impacted Hawaii and U.S. Territories in the Pacific region in 2018. Sign up dates for assistance as well as dates and locations for outreach events will be announced as soon as they are available. Outreach presentations will be held in each of Hawaii's Counties as well as Guam, Saipan and American Samoa. Disasters covered under this legislation include: Tropical Storm Gita, April Flooding of Kauai and Honolulu Counties, Tropical Storm Maria, Hawaii County Volcano Eruption (Lava and VOG), Hurricane Lane, Tropical Storm Olivia, Typhoon Mangkhut, and Typhoon Yutu.

Three of our local FSA employees will be recognized on July 22nd in Washington D.C. for exceptional customer service; Kristen Kiri in the State Office was selected as Non-Supervisor of the Year, Carissa Pajo in the Hawaii County Service Center was named New Employee of the Year (less than five years' service), and Linda Kow will receive the Team award for the Hawaii County Farm Loan Team's customer support for 2018 disasters. These exceptional employees are representative of all the very talented employees supporting producers throughout Hawaii and the Pacific Basin. In my 32 plus years of Federal service in three separate Agencies, I have never witnessed or worked with a finer group of employees than those assigned to FSA Hawaii & Pacific Basin; their dedication, performance and motivation is simply outstanding and our producers deserve nothing less.

AL Frenzel, State Executive Director
USDA Farm Service Agency Hawaii & Pacific Basin

Hawaii & Pacific Basin FSA State Office

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State Executive Director:
AL Frenzel

Chief Program Specialist:
Patrick Lewis

Chief, Farm Loan Program:
Theresa L. Correa

Upcoming County Committee Meetings:

Hawaii County Committee
October 11, 2019 at 8:30 am

Honolulu County Committee
July 19, 2019 at 3:00 pm

Maui County Committee
July 18, 2019 at 8:30 am

Kauai County Committee
August 21, 2019 at 9:00 am

Guam County Committee
October 9, 2019 at 9:00 am

CNMI County Committee
October 9, 2019 at 11:00 am

Contact the County Office to confirm meeting date and time, as budget constraints may limit the County Committee's ability to meet each month.

[Click here for a list of County Offices, contact numbers and addresses.](#)

Website for Hawaii and Pacific Basin FSA:

Nominations Open for the 2019 County Committee

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) encourages all farmers, ranchers, and FSA program participants to take part in the Hawaii and Guam County Committee election nomination process.

FSA's county committees are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA and allow grassroots input and local administration of federal farm programs.

Committees are comprised of locally elected agricultural producers responsible for the fair and equitable administration of FSA farm programs in their counties. Committee members are accountable to the Secretary of Agriculture. If elected, members become part of a local decision making and farm program delivery process.

A county committee is composed of three to 11 elected members from local administrative areas (LAA). Each member serves a three-year term. One-third of the seats on these committees are open for election each year.

County committees may have an appointed advisor to further represent the local interests of underserved farmers and ranchers. Underserved producers are beginning, women and other minority farmers and ranchers and landowners and/or operators who have limited resources.

All nomination forms for the 2019 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA service center by Aug. 1, 2019. For more information on FSA county committee elections and appointments, refer to the FSA fact sheet: *Eligibility to Vote and Hold Office as a COC Member* available online at: fsa.usda.gov/elections.

Maui County is Eligible for Emergency Loans

Maui County was declared a primary disaster due to drought and heat using the streamlined Secretarial Disaster Designation process. Under this designation, producers with operations in any primary or contiguous county are eligible to apply for low interest emergency loans.

The streamlined disaster designation process issues a drought disaster declaration when a county has experienced a drought intensity value of at least a D2 (severe drought) level for eight consecutive weeks based on the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#) during the crop year.

Emergency loans help producers recover from production and physical losses due to drought, flooding and other natural disasters or quarantine.

www.fsa.usda.gov/hi

Producers have eight months from the date of the declaration to apply for emergency loan assistance. FSA will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability. Producers can borrow up to 100 percent of actual production or physical losses, to a maximum amount of \$500,000.

For more information about emergency loans, please contact your local FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

New Farmers.gov Feature Helps Producers Find Farm Loans that Fit Their Operation

A new online tool can help farmers and ranchers find information on U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) farm loans that may best fit their operations. USDA has launched the new *Farm Loan Discovery Tool* as the newest feature on farmers.gov, the Department's self-service website for farmers.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers a variety of loan options to help farmers finance their operations. From buying land to financing the purchase of equipment, FSA loans can help. Compared to this time last year, FSA has seen an 18 percent increase in the amount it has obligated for direct farm ownership loans, and through the 2018 Farm Bill, has [increased the limits](#) for several loan products.

USDA conducted field research in eight states, gathering input from farmers and FSA farm loan staff to better understand their needs and challenges.

How the Tool Works

Farmers who are looking for financing options to operate a farm or buy land can answer a few simple questions about what they are looking to fund and how much money they need to borrow. After submitting their answers, farmers will be provided information on farm loans that best fit their specific needs. The loan application and additional resources also will be provided.

Farmers can download application quick guides that outline what to expect from preparing an application to receiving a loan decision. There are four guides that cover loans to individuals, entities, and youth, as well as information on microloans. The guides include general eligibility requirements and a list of required forms and documentation for each type of loan. These guides can help farmers prepare before their first USDA service center visit with a loan officer.

Farmers can access the *Farm Loan Discovery Tool* by visiting farmers.gov/fund and clicking the "Start" button. Follow the prompts and answer five simple questions to receive loan information that is applicable to your agricultural operation. The tool is built to run on any modern browser like Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or the Safari browser, and is fully functional on mobile devices. It does not work in Internet Explorer.

About Farmers.gov

In 2018, USDA unveiled farmers.gov, a dynamic, mobile-friendly public website combined with an authenticated portal where farmers will be able to apply for programs, process transactions, and manage accounts.

The *Farm Loan Discovery Tool* is one of many resources on farmers.gov to help connect farmers to information that can help their operations. Earlier this year, USDA launched the *My Financial*

Information feature, which enables farmers to view their loan information, history, payments, and alerts by logging into the website.

USDA is building farmers.gov for farmers, by farmers. In addition to the interactive farm loan features, the site also offers a Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool. Farmers can visit farmers.gov/recover/disaster-assistance-tool#step-1 to find disaster assistance programs that can help their operation recover from natural disasters.

With feedback from customers and field employees who serve those customers, farmers.gov delivers farmer-focused features through an agile, iterative process to deliver the greatest immediate value to America's agricultural producers – helping farmers and ranchers do right, and feed everyone.

For more information or to locate your USDA Service Center, visit farmers.gov.

Environmental Review Required Before Project Implementation

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires Federal agencies to consider all potential environmental impacts for federally-funded projects before the project is approved.

For all Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs, an environmental review must be completed before actions are approved, such as site preparation or ground disturbance. These programs include, but are not limited to, the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program and farm loans. If project implementation begins before FSA has completed an environmental review, this will result in a denial of the request. There are exceptions regarding the Stafford Act and emergencies. It is important to wait until you receive written approval of your project proposal before starting any actions, including, but not limited to, vegetation clearing, site preparation or ground disturbance.

Remember to contact your local FSA office early in your planning process to determine what level of environmental review is required for your program application so that it can be completed timely.

Applications cannot be approved contingent upon the completion of an environmental review. FSA must have copies of all permits and plans before an application can be approved.

July 2019 Interest Rates

Farm Operating Loans – 3.250%
Farm Operating Microloans – 3.250%
Farm Ownership Loans – 3.875%
Farm Ownership Microloans- 3.875%
Farm Ownership Loans Direct Down Payment for Beginning Farmer or Rancher – 1.50%
Emergency Loans – 3.750%

FSA Hawaii & Pacific Basin State Committee

Teena Marie Rasmussen, Chairperson
Wilson Kenzo Koike
Glenn Martinez
Boyd J. Ready
Simon Russell

Sign Up Today for Text Alerts from FSA

Subscribers Can Receive Important Program Reminders and Updates

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) farmers and ranchers now can receive notifications from their county office through text messages on their cell phone.

Whether producers are in the field, on a tractor or even on horseback, this service enables FSA customers and stakeholders to receive notifications while on the go. Producers will receive text messages regarding important program deadlines, reporting requirements, outreach events and updates.

Producers can text the **short codes** below to FSANOW (372-669) to subscribe to text message alerts from their respective counties. Standard text messaging rates apply. Contact your wireless carrier for details associated with your particular data plan. Participants may unsubscribe at any time.

Hawaii County : **HPBHawaii**
Honolulu County: **HPBHonolulu**
Kauai County: **HPBKauai**
Maui County: **HPBMaui**

Please contact your [local FSA office](#) if you have questions regarding FSA's email news service or the text message option.

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