

December 2013



## Alabama FSA State Updates

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### Alabama FSA State Office

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**State Executive Director:**  
Daniel Robinson

**State Committee Members:**  
Dr. Walter Hill, Chairperson  
Laura Elliott, Member  
Danny Ellison, Member  
George Hodge, Member  
Fred Hughes, Member

**Next State Committee Meeting:** December 19-20, 2013

### Topics for December

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## New County Committee Election Ballots to be Mailed

The County Committee Election ballots that were mailed to producers on Nov. 4 were incorrectly printed with the producer's name and address on the back of the ballot. County committee elections must use a secret ballot so the misprinted ballots cannot be used. Please destroy or recycle the misprinted ballot. If you have already voted, your ballot will be destroyed unopened.

**New ballots will be mailed to producers on December 20, 2013.** These ballots will indicate that they are the corrected ballot in several places, including on the outside of the mailing, on the ballot and on the outside of the return envelope.

**The corrected ballot must be returned to the FSA Office or postmarked by January 17, 2014.** If mailed, postage is required and ballots must be signed and postmarked by midnight January 17, 2014. All newly elected county committee members will take office February 18, 2014. All county committee members whose term expires on Dec. 31, 2013, will have their term extended to January 31, 2014.

To be an eligible voter, farmers and ranchers must participate or cooperate in an FSA program. A person who is not of legal voting age, but supervises and conducts the farming operations of an entire farm may also be eligible to vote.

More information on county committees, such as the new 2013 fact sheet and brochures, can be found on the FSA website at [www.fsa.usda.gov/elections](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/elections) or at a local USDA Service Center.

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## 2014 Acreage Reporting Dates

Alabama producers now have until January 15, 2014, to report crops that have a November 15, 2013, reporting deadline without paying a late-file fee. Crops under this waiver include apiculture, PRF (pasture, rangeland, and forage) insured crops, and permanent grasses, including, but not limited to Bahia, Bermuda, Dallas, and Fescue. The Risk Management Agency (RMA) did not grant a waiver so producers need to consult their crop insurance agent for deadlines for insured crops.

In order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements, all producers are encouraged to visit their local FSA county office to file an accurate crop certification report by the applicable deadline.

The following acreage reporting dates are applicable for Alabama:

January 2, 2014: Honey  
January 15, 2014: Blueberries, canola, rapeseed, fall oats, peaches, and fall wheat  
March 15, 2014: Pecans and potatoes (planted Jan. 1- Mar. 1)  
May 15, 2014: Sweet corn, potatoes (planted Mar. 2 – Apr. 15)  
May 31, 2014: Nursery crops  
July 15, 2014: All other crops  
September 30, 2014: Aquaculture and value loss crops

The following exceptions apply to the above acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the above acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the above acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.
- If a perennial forage crop is reported with the intended use of “cover only,” “green manure,” “left standing,” or “seed,” then the acreage must be reported by July 15th.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP covered crops is the earlier of the dates listed above or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

Additionally, producers can purchase both NAP and RMA coverage for 2014 annual forage crops. NAP coverage will not be available for 2015 annual forage crops.

Late file fees will be assessed for 2013 crops reported after September 15, 2013, and 2014 crops reported after January 15, 2014.

For questions regarding crop certification and crop loss reports, please contact your local FSA county office.

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## FSA Advises Producers to Anticipate Payment Reductions Due to Mandated Sequester

:USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is reminding farmers and ranchers who participate in FSA programs to plan accordingly in FY2014 for automatic spending reductions known as sequestration. The Budget Control Act

of 2011 (BCA) mandates that federal agencies implement automatic, annual reductions to discretionary and mandatory spending limits. For mandatory programs, the sequestration rate for FY2014 is 7.2%. Accordingly, FSA is implementing sequestration for the following programs:

- Dairy Indemnity Payment Program;
- Marketing Assistance Loans;
- Loan Deficiency Payments;
- Sugar Loans;
- Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program;
- Tobacco Transition Payment Program;
- 2013 Direct and Counter-Cyclical Payments;
- 2013 Average Crop Revenue Election Program;
- 2011 and 2012 Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program;
- Storage, handling; and Economic Adjustment Assistance for upland cotton

With exception of the Emergency Forestry Conservation Reserve Program (EFCRP), Conservation Reserve Program payments are specifically exempt by statute from sequestration, thus these payments will not be reduced. However, EFCRP payments will be reduced by 5.1 percent.

These sequester percentages reflect current law estimates; however with the continuing budget uncertainty, Congress still may adjust the exact percentage reduction. Today's announcement intends to help producers plan for the impact of sequestration cuts in FY2014.

At this time, FSA is required to implement the sequester reductions. Due to the expiration of the Farm Bill on September 30, FSA does not have the flexibility to cover these payment reductions in the same manner as in FY13. FSA will provide notification as early as practical on the specific payment reductions.

For information about FSA programs, visit your county USDA Service Center or go to [www.fsa.usda.gov/](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/).

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## Direct and Guaranteed Farm Loans Available

FSA offers loans for farmers and ranchers to purchase farmland and finance agricultural operations. FSA loan programs are designed to help producers who are temporarily unable to obtain private or commercial credit. In many cases, applicants are beginning farmers who have insufficient net worth to qualify for financing through a commercial lender. In other instances, borrowers might have suffered setbacks from natural disasters or might be persons with limited resources. Farm ownership loans or farm operating loans may be obtained as direct loans for a maximum of up to \$300,000. Guaranteed loans can reach a maximum indebtedness of \$1,302,000. Producers are encouraged to apply early so that a loan can be processed and funded in a timely manner. Special loan funds are also available under the Beginning Farmer and Limited Resource Loan Program, Socially Disadvantaged Loan Program, and the Rural Youth Loan Program.

December loan interest rates are as follows: Direct Farm Operating Loans--1.857 percent; and Direct Farm Ownership Loans-- 4.125 percent.

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## Microloans

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) developed the Microloan (ML) program to better serve the unique financial operating needs of beginning, niche and small family farm operations.

FSA offers applicants a Microloan designed to help farmers with credit needs of \$35,000 or less. The loan features a streamlined application process built to fit the needs of new and smaller producers. This loan program

will also be useful to specialty crop producers and operators of community supported agriculture (CSA).

Eligible applicants can apply for a maximum amount of \$35,000 to pay for initial start-up expenses such as hoop houses to extend the growing season, essential tools, irrigation and annual expenses such as seed, fertilizer, utilities, land rents, marketing, and distribution expenses. As financing needs increase, applicants can apply for a regular operating loan up to the maximum amount of \$300,000 or obtain financing from a commercial lender under FSA's Guaranteed Loan Program.

Individuals who are interested in applying for a microloan or would like to discuss other farm loan programs available should contact their local FSA office to set up an appointment with a loan official.

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USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).