



NEWSLETTER



Imperial County Farm Service Agency

177 N. Imperial Avenue, El Centro, CA 92243 • Phone 760.352.3531 XT2 • Fax 760.352.0219

Website: www.fsa.usda.gov Office Hours: 8:00AM – 4:30PM Monday - Friday

County Committee Election Results

Congratulations to **Gilbert Gonzalez** and **Ernest H. Leimgruber Jr.!** Gilbert was elected to represent farmers from the south-end of Imperial Valley (LAA-1) and Ernest will serve as 1st Alternate.

FSA appreciates all of the voters for taking the time to complete the election ballot. The county committee system works only because of your participation.

The committee members will hold their organizational meeting in January to determine who will serve as the county committee chairman and vice-chairman.

Special thanks go out to Curt Corda for his past years of service as county committee member for LAA-1. Curt provided invaluable service as committee member and showed commitment and dedication to the farmers he served.

2011 Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program Applications

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) will continue to accept SURE applications for 2011 crop losses through June 7, 2013. The SURE Program provides payments to producers when crop revenues are less than the crop guarantee. The SURE Program payment is equal to 60 percent of the difference between the crop

guarantee and revenue. To be eligible, the producer must have at least one crop with a 10 percent production loss.

To determine the guarantee and revenue for the SURE Program, all crops on all farms for a producer are included in the calculation. Payments under the SURE Program are limited to \$100,000.

To be eligible for the 2011 SURE Program, producers must have crop insurance on all insurable crops. For crops that are not covered by crop insurance such as pumpkins and cucumbers, producers must have purchased Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage from FSA. The Crop Insurance and NAP purchase requirement is waived for crops that are not economically significant to the farming operation.

For more information concerning the 2011 SURE program or other Farm Service Agency programs, contact your local FSA office or visit the Farm Service Agency website at www.fsa.usda.gov/pas/.

Controlled Substance

Any person convicted under federal or state law of a controlled substance violation could be ineligible for USDA payments or benefits. Violations include planting, harvesting or growing a prohibited plant. Prohibited plants include marijuana, opium poppies and other drug producing plants.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)

The noninsured crop disaster assistance program (NAP) is a federally funded program that helps producers reduce their risk when growing food and fiber crops, specialty crops and crops for livestock feed. These benefits are only available for crops for which the catastrophic level of crop insurance is not available. Application for coverage must be filed by the applicable crop's application closing date.

Production records for all crops must be reported to FSA no later than the acreage reporting date for the crop for the following year. FSA requires that any production reported in a loss year be verified according to agency specifications. *NAP losses must be reported within 15 days of loss.*

Hispanic and Women Farmer and Rancher Claims Period

Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers who allege discrimination by the USDA in past decades can file claims until March 25, 2013.

The process offers a voluntary alternative to litigation for each Hispanic or female farmer and rancher who can prove that USDA denied their applications for loan or loan servicing assistance for discriminatory reasons for certain time periods between 1981 and 2000.

As announced in February 2011, the voluntary claims process will make available at least \$1.33 billion for cash awards and tax relief payments, plus up to \$160 million in farm debt relief to eligible Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers. There are no filing fees to participate in the program.

USDA will continue reaching out to potential Hispanic and female claimants, around the country to inform those who may be eligible for this program.

Website: www.farmerclaims.gov

Phone: 1-888-508-4429

Deadline for Claims: March 25, 2013.

Claimants can obtain a claims package in the mail by calling 1-888-509-4429 or by visiting the website www.farmerclaims.gov. Public meetings are also being held in many areas to share further information. Contact your nearest FSA office to get a schedule of meetings in your area.

Electronic News Delivery

The USDA Farm Service Agency offices have moved to a paperless news distribution system. Producers are asked to enroll in the new *GovDelivery* system, which provides notices, newsletters and electronic reminders instead of a hard copy through the mail.

FSA, like many other organizations, is trying to work smarter and be more efficient. Moving to electronic notifications via email helps conserve resources and save taxpayer dollars. Producers can now subscribe to receive free email updates by going to www.fsa.usda.gov/subscribe.

Special Accommodations

Special accommodations will be made upon request for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment or hearing impairment. If accommodations are required, individuals should notify the county FSA office staff in person or by phone. This service is provided for office visits and any special event sponsored by FSA.

Foreign Buyers Notification

The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) requires all foreign owners of U.S. agricultural land to report their purchases or sales of property to the Secretary of Agriculture. The Farm Service Agency administers this program for USDA.

All individuals who are not U.S. citizens, and have purchased or sold agricultural land in the county are required to report the transaction to FSA within 90 days of the closing. Failure to submit the AFIDA form (FSA-153) could result in civil penalties of up to 25 percent of the fair market value of the property. County government offices, realtors, attorneys and others involved in real estate transactions are reminded to notify foreign investors of these reporting requirements.

Farming Operation Changes

Producers who have bought or sold land, or added or dropped rented land from their operation must report those changes to the FSA office as soon as possible. A copy of the deed or recorded land contract for purchased property is needed to maintain accurate records with FSA. Failure to report changes can lead to possible program ineligibility and penalties. While making record updates, be sure to update signature authorizations. Making record changes now will save time in the Spring.

Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Compliance

Landowners and operators are reminded that in order to receive payments from USDA, compliance with Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions is required. Farmers with HEL determined soils must comply with tillage, crop residue, and rotation requirements as specified in their conservation plan.

Producers should notify FSA prior to conducting land clearing or drainage projects to insure compliance. If you intend to clear any trees to create new cropland, these areas will need to be reviewed to ensure any work will not jeopardize your eligibility for benefits.

Landowners and operators can complete form AD-1026 Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification to determine whether a referral to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is necessary.

For more information on Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation provisions, contact a FSA County Office or visit the FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov/.

Power of Attorney

For those who find it difficult to visit the county office because of work schedules, distance, health, etc., FSA has a power of attorney form available that allows producers to designate another person to conduct business at the office. If interested, contact our office or any Farm Service Agency office for more information.

Bank Account Changes

Current policy mandates that FSA payments be electronically transferred into a bank account. In order for timely payments to be made, producers need to notify the FSA county office when an account has been changed or if another financial institution purchases the bank where payments are sent. Payments can be delayed if the FSA office is not aware of updates to bank accounts and bank routing numbers.

Appeal Process

After an FSA official makes a decision on a request for USDA services or application, the producer will be sent a letter informing him/her of the decision and options that can be pursued.

Generally, program participants have three choices — an informal review with the original agency decision-maker, an opportunity for mediation and finally an appeal to the next level of authority within the agency. County office staff has further details.

FSA Signature Policy

Husbands and wives may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and Commodity Credit Corporation programs in which either has an interest. This option is automatically available unless a written request for exclusion is made to the county office staff by either spouse.

There are exceptions to the rule. Spouses may not sign on behalf of each other for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations or other similar entities.

Individual signatures are also required on certain Farm Loan Program and Farm Storage Facility Loan documents.

For more clarification on spousal signature authority, contact your local FSA office.

Emergency Conservation Program Authorized

The Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) was recently authorized as a result of the significant damage to farmland caused by last summers' thunderstorms, floods and flash floods. ECP provides emergency funding and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters.

ECP participants may receive cost-share assistance of up to 75% of the cost to implement approved emergency conservation practices. Qualified limited-resource producers receive cost-share assistance of up to 90% of the cost to implement approved emergency conservation practices. **Applications for ECP are being accepted through January 29, 2013.** Funding for ECP is appropriated by Congress.

**NOTICE
TO HISPANIC
AND/OR
WOMEN
FARMERS OR
RANCHERS
COMPENSATION
FOR CLAIMS OF
DISCRIMINATION**

If you believe that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) improperly denied farm loan benefits to you between 1981 and 2000 because you are Hispanic, or because you are female, you may be eligible to apply for compensation.

To register your name to receive a claims packet, call the Farmer and Rancher Call Center at 1-888-508-4429 or visit: www.farmerclaims.gov

The claims package will have detailed information about the eligibility and claims process.



USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

IMPORTANT CHANGES TO FSA CROP REPORTING

DATES – Effective July 1, 2012, this FSA county office went from two acreage reporting dates to no less than eight acreage reporting dates. The table below identifies various crops and corresponding deadlines. The next reporting deadline that is rapidly approaching is JANUARY 15th, applicable to sugar beets and all citrus. If you have these crops or any others with prior reporting dates, and have not contacted this office to file your report, please do so immediately. New reporting dates are as follows:

Crop	Report Dates
Aquaculture	09/30/12
Perennial Forage, potatoes	12/15/12
Honey	01/02/13
Sugar beets, all citrus	01/15/13
Wheat, fall-seeded barley & oats	03/15/13
Table Grapes	05/15/13
Nursery	05/31/13
Spring-seeded barley, oats, corn, cotton, onions, sudan , tomatoes and all other crops	07/15/13

Selected Interest Rates for

January, 2013

Farm Operating Direct	1.250%
Farm Ownership Direct	3.125%
Farm Ownership Direct, Joint Financing	5.000%
Farm Ownership Direct Down Payment	1.500%
Emergency	2.250%
Conservation Loan	1.625%
Commodity Loans 1996-Present	1.875%

Dates to Remember

Jan 15	Acreage Report Deadline for sugar beets and all citrus
Jan 21	Holiday – Office Closed
Jan 29	ECP Application Deadline
Mar 1	NAP 2013 closing date for all annual crops
Mar 15	Acreage Report Deadline for all fall-seeded small grains (wheat, etc.)
Mar 25	Hispanic and Women Farmer and Rancher Claims Period ends
June 7	SURE sign up ends
July 15	S3439 Declaration deadline to apply for Emergency Loan Assistance
July 15	Acreage Report Deadline for corn, cotton, onions, sudan, tomatoes & all other crops

County Office Staff

County Executive Director
Rosalinda Singh

Program Technicians
Carmen Perez
Julia Contreras

County Committee
Gilbert Gonzalez – LAA1
Stephen Benson – LAA2
Craig Alameda – LAA3

Farm Loan Staff
(located in Bakersfield FSA office)

Thomas Hunton

Elsa Mora

Phone: 661.336.0967

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