



# NEWSLETTER



## Farm Service Agency News

**June 2013**

### Imperial County FSA Office

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[www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov)

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

**County Committee**  
Stephen Benson  
Gilbert Gonzalez  
Craig Alameda

**County Executive Director -**  
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**Farm Loan Staff –  
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## 2013 County Committee Elections

The election of agricultural producers to the Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees is important to all farmers and ranchers, whether beginning or long-established, large or small operation. It is crucial that every eligible producer participate in these elections because FSA county committees are a link between the agricultural community and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

County Committee (COC) members are a critical component of FSA operations. The intent is to have the COC reflect the makeup of the producers and represent all constituents. This means wherever possible, minorities, women or lower income producers need to be on the committee to speak for these underrepresented groups.

County committees provide local input on:

- Commodity price support loans and payments
- Conservation programs
- Incentive, indemnity and disaster payments for some commodities
- Emergency programs
- Payment eligibility.

FSA county committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws and members apply their judgment and knowledge to make local decisions.

### Election Period

June 17, 2013 – The nomination period begins.

Aug. 1, 2013 – This is the last day to file nomination forms (FSA-669A) at the local USDA Service Center.

Nov. 4, 2013 – Ballots mailed to eligible voters.

Dec. 2, 2013 – Last day to return completed ballots to the USDA Service Center.

Jan. 1, 2014 – Newly elected county committee members take office.

### Who Can Hold Office

To hold office as a county committee member, a person must meet the basic eligibility criteria:

- Participate or cooperate in a program administered by FSA
- Be eligible to vote in a county committee election
- Reside in the local administrative area (LAA) in which the person is a candidate.

Not have been:

- Removed or disqualified from the office of county committee member, alternate or employee
- Removed for cause from any public office or have been convicted of larceny, embezzlement or any other felony
- Dishonorably discharged from any branch of the armed services.

### Nominations

To become a nominee, eligible individuals must sign nomination form FSA-669A. The form includes a statement

that the nominee agrees to serve if elected. This form is available from this office and online @ [www.fsa.usda.gov/elections](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/elections). Scroll down to the links under “Election Materials” and click “2013 Nomination Form”. Election Fact sheets are also available, and can be accessed by scrolling down to the links under “Fact Sheets”.

Nomination forms for the 2013 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA Service Center by close of business on Aug. 1, 2013.

Agricultural producers who participate or cooperate in an FSA program may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee. Individuals may nominate themselves or others as a candidate. Additionally, organizations representing minority and women farmers or ranchers may nominate candidates. Nomination forms are filed for the county committee of the office that administers a producer’s farm records.

### **Who Can Vote**

Agricultural producers of legal voting age may be eligible to vote if they participate or cooperate in any FSA program. A person who is not of legal voting age but supervises and conducts the farming operations of an entire farm also may be eligible to vote. More information about voting eligibility requirements can be found in the FSA fact sheet titled “FSA County Committee Election – Eligibility to Vote and Hold Office as a County Committee Member.” Producers may contact their local USDA Service Center for more information.

### **This Year’s Elections**

The area served by the Imperial FSA County Committee is divided into three LAA’s (Local Administrative Areas). One member on the committee represents each LAA and serves a 3-year term. This year, LAA #2 (That part of Imperial Valley NORTH of Keystone Road) is up for election.

Please contact this office for more information or to request a nomination form.

## **2013 DCP Signups Continue**

The sign-up period for DCP is still open. Producers are encouraged to sign up for DCP before the Aug. 2, 2013, deadline. The 2013 DCP program provisions are unchanged from 2012, except that all eligible participants in 2013 may choose to enroll in either DCP or ACRE for the 2013 crop year. [Read more about DCP](#) or contact this office for more information, or an appointment to enroll. The deadline to have enrolled in ACRE for 2013 was June 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## **2013 Acreage Reporting Requirements**

Filing an accurate and timely acreage report for all crops/commodities and land uses, including failed and prevented planted acreage can prevent loss of benefits for a variety of USDA programs. Upcoming 2013 The next acreage reporting deadline is July 15, 2013 and is applicable to several crops of significance. Failed acreage must be reported within 15 days of the disaster event and before disposition of the crop. Prevented planting must be reported no later than 15 days after the final planting date. If you have not completed your 2013 acreage report, please contact this office immediately.

## **Sodbusting**

Farmers and ranchers should be aware that if they use highly erodible land for crop production without proper conservation measures, they risk losing eligibility to participate in Farm Service Agency programs. Before producers clear, plow or otherwise prepare areas not presently under crop production for planting, they are required to file an AD-1026, indicating the area to be brought into production.

If Natural Resources Conservation Service indicates that the area will be highly erodible land, the producer will be required to develop and implement a conservation plan on the affected acreage before bringing land into production if they wish to protect their farm program eligibility.

## Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Compliance

Landowners and operators are reminded that in order to receive payments from USDA, they must be compliant with Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions. Farmers with HEL determined soils must apply 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 ensure 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](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

## Direct and Guaranteed Loans

The Farm Service Agency is committed to providing family farmers with loans to meet their farm credit needs. If you are having trouble getting the credit you need for your farm, or regularly borrow from FSA, direct and guaranteed loans are currently available.

Ask your lender about an FSA loan guarantee if you've had a setback and your lender is reluctant to extend or renew your loan. Guaranteed loans have a maximum limit of \$1,302,000. This makes the maximum combination of direct and guaranteed loan indebtedness \$1,602,000.

The one-time loan origination fee charged on FSA guaranteed farm ownership and operating loans is 1.5 percent of the guaranteed portion of the loan. To find out more about FSA loan programs, contact the county office staff.

## Loans for the Socially Disadvantaged

FSA has farm operating loans as well as loans to purchase or improve farms or ranches to assist applicants to begin or continue in agriculture production. While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, FSA has priority funding for socially disadvantaged applicants.

A socially disadvantaged applicant is a person who is a member of a group that has been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice without regard to the members' individual qualities. For purposes of this program, socially disadvantaged groups are women, African-Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders. FSA loans are available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere.

## Beginning and Limited Resource Loans

FSA has a program to assist beginning farmers and or members of socially disadvantaged groups to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:

- Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years
- Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm
- Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA
- Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's median size.

Each member of an entity must meet the eligibility requirements. Loan approval is not guaranteed. Additional program information, loan applications and other materials are available at the local USDA Service Center or visit [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

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177 N. Imperial Ave  
El Centro CA 92243



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Important Dates to Remember	
June 17	County Committee (COC) Nomination Period Opens
June 26	Next COC meeting (Tentative)
July 15	Acreage report deadline
Aug 1	COC nomination period closes
Aug 2	Deadline to enroll in 2013 DCP

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.) Persons with disabilities, who wish to file a program complaint, write to the address below or if you require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) please contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech disabilities and wish to file either an EEO or program complaint, please contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339 or (800) 845-6136 (in Spanish).

**Appeal Process** – After an FSA official makes a decision on your request or application for USDA services, you will be sent a letter informing you of the decision and options you can pursue if you disagree. Generally, appellants have 3 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.

**Reasonable Accommodations** – Will be made, upon request for individuals with disabilities, vision impaired or hearing impairment. If accommodations are required, please call this office @ 760.352 3531.

**Civil Rights Complaint Process** – Any person, class or group of persons may file a discrimination complaint within 180 days of an alleged discriminatory action. Complaints may be filed in writing or orally with the agency head, any designated agency head, any designated agency official or the Secretary of Agriculture, USDA, Washington, DC 20250. Assistance in filing a complaint can be obtained by calling or visiting any FSA office.