



January 2009

New Haven/Middlesex County News

New Haven/Middlesex
County USDA
Service Center

New Haven/Middlesex
County FSA
900 Northrop Road
Suite# A
Wallingford, CT 06492
203-269-6665 (phone)
203-294-9741 (fax)
www.fsa.usda.gov/ct

Hours:
Monday - Friday
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

County Committee:
Bill Weed
Chairman

Nelson Cecarelli
Vice-Chairman

Richard Brock
Regular Member

Joyce Werbiski
Minority Advisor

**Next County Committee
meeting will be Tuesday
February 17th at 11:00
AM**

Staff:
Nancy Welsh
County Executive Director

Ann Marie McCard
Program Technician

Teresa Peavey
Program Technician

Kathy Gostyla
Program Technician

County Committee Election Results

Congratulations to Richard Brock! Richard was reelected to represent farmers from Chester, Clinton, Cromwell, Deep River, Durham, East Haddam, East Hampton, Essex, Haddam, Killingworth, Middlefield, Middletown, Old Saybrook, Portland, and Westbrook on the county committee. Richard was elected to his second consecutive term.

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 held their organizational meeting on January 20th. It was determined Bill Weed will serve as the county committee chairman and Nelson Cecarelli will serve as vice-chairman.

DCP Sign Up Underway

Sign-up has started for the 2009 Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment (DCP) Program for farms with base acres. You can sign up online or at local USDA service centers. Signup will continue until June 1, 2009. The June 1, 2009 deadline is mandatory for all participants. FSA will not accept any late-filed applications.

FSA computes DCP Program payments using base acres and payment yields established for each farm. Eligible producers receive direct payments at rates established by statute regardless of market prices. For 2009, you may request to receive advance direct payments based on 22 percent of the direct payment for each commodity associated with the farm. Counter-cyclical payment rates vary depending on market prices and are issued only when the effective price for a commodity is below its target price.

Producers who are eligible for the DCP Program will also be eligible to enroll in the Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) Program. The enrollment period for the ACRE Program will begin in the spring. You may first enroll in the

DCP Program, receive advance direct payments and then later modify your enrollment to include the ACRE program or you may wait and elect to enroll in DCP and ACRE at the same time in Spring 2009.

MILC Sign Up Underway

Signup for the Milk Income Loss Contract Program (MILC) is underway and will continue through the program's expiration date, Sept. 30, 2012.

The 2008 Farm Bill reauthorizes the MILC Program, which operates similarly to the counter-cyclical payment program for crops, and makes three key changes in program operation. Under the Farm Bill, the MILC payment rate and the per-operation poundage limit are modified, depending on when the milk is produced. In addition, a "feed cost adjuster," is introduced over the life of the 2008 Act, which adjusts the \$16.94 per hundredweight (cwt.) benchmark price upward depending on the cost of feed rations. When available, MILC payments are based on a payment rate percentage that is multiplied by the difference between a now-flexible target (\$16.94 per cwt. or higher) and the specific month's Boston Class I price of milk.

The 2008 Farm Bill made changes to the provisions for payment eligibility and adjusted gross income (AGI). If the individual or entity has non-farm AGI greater than \$500,000, the individual or entity is not eligible for MILC benefits.

For more information on the MILC program, contact our office at 203-269-6665.

USDA Enacts Changes to Payment Limitations, Income Qualifications, and Implements Direct Attribution

USDA recently published an interim final regulation in the Federal Register announcing changes to both Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) qualifications, program payment limitations, and direct attribution for FSA and Natural



Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs, which became effective in accordance with the 2008 Farm Bill.

For commodity and disaster programs, the AGI limitation was reduced from \$2.5 million AGI from all sources to a three-year average non-farm AGI of \$500,000 such that a person or entity shall not be eligible for such programs if the non-farm AGI exceeds \$500,000. Also, under the new regulations, an individual or entity must have a 3-year average AGI less than or equal to \$750,000 per year from farm income in order to qualify for direct payments issued under the Direct and Counter-cyclical Program.

The definition of income derived from farming, ranching and forestry operations was expanded to include, among other items, such items as the packing, storing and transporting of agricultural commodities; production of livestock products; farm-based production of renewable bio-energy; and in some instances, the providing of operational inputs to farmers, ranchers and foresters.

For conservation programs, the average nonfarm AGI limitation is \$1 million or less for eligibility with allowances for certain exceptions.

Individuals and entities must be "actively engaged in farming" with respect to a farming operation in order to be eligible for specified payments and benefits. To be "actively engaged in farming," the individual or entity must make significant contributions to the farming operation of: (1) capital, equipment, land, or a combination; and (2) personal labor or active personal management, or a combination.

Public comments on this interim final rule must be submitted to the Department by within 30 days of the date of publication.

Controlled Substance

Any person who is 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.

Special Accommodations

Special accommodations will be made upon request for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment or hearing impairment. If accommodations are required, individuals should contact the county FSA office staff directly or by phone.

Power of Attorney

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

Bank Account Changes

Current policy mandates that FSA payments be electronically transferred into your bank account. In order for timely payments to be made, producers need to notify the FSA county office if your account has been changed or if another financial institution purchases your bank.

Payments can be delayed if the FSA office is not aware of updates to your account and routing numbers.

Appeal Process

After an FSA official makes a decision on your request for USDA services or application, you will be sent a letter informing you of the decision and options you can pursue if you disagree.

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.

Loans for Socially Disadvantaged

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) can make and guarantee loans to socially disadvantaged applicants to buy and operate family size farms and ranches. Funds specifically for these loans are reserved each year. A socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of the group without regard to their individual qualities. For purposes of this program, socially disadvantaged groups are women, African Americans, American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, and Asians and Pacific Islanders. Contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager or Officer for more details and assistance in applying.

Applications for FSA Loans



Farmers and ranchers that intend to apply to the Farm Service Agency for loan assistance for the upcoming crop year are encouraged to file their applications as early as possible. Filing early will help ensure that your loan is processed and approved as early as possible so that planting decisions can be made. Failure to apply early can result in a delay in processing loans due to the volume of applications that must be processed in date order. Contact Ellen Losee at 860-626-8258 for more details and assistance in applying.

Youth Loans

Remember FSA makes operating loans to individual rural youths age 10 through 20 to establish and operate income producing projects. These projects must be of modest size and be initiated, developed, and carried out by rural youths participating in 4-H Clubs, FFA, or a similar organization or with a vocational teacher or county extension agent. The project must be an organized and supervised program of work. It must be planned and operated with the assistance of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan, and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. Contact Ellen Losee at 860-626-8258 for more details.

Connecticut Grown Tents

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture will be ordering more Connecticut Grown tents soon. These will be sold on a cost-share basis so the tents will be available for around \$200 - \$225 (price to be determined). If you would like one or more of the tents or if you have questions, please contact Rick Macsuga at (860) 713-2544.



Environmental Quality Incentives Program Sign-Up Announced

Douglas L. Zehner, State Conservationist for U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service in Connecticut has announced that applications will be taken for the agency's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

"Even though program rules are still being finalized," said Zehner, "we are urging eligible farmers and producers to apply as soon as possible. By accepting EQIP applications now, we can develop conservation plans that address important environmental concerns and be well positioned to provide contracts to producers in the next few weeks."

The program offered is through the new 2008 Farm Bill and is administered by NRCS. Eligible conservation practices are cost-shared in accordance with the 2009 EQIP payment schedule. Through EQIP, farmers may receive financial and technical assistance with structural and management conservation practices on agricultural land. Incentive payments may be made to encourage a farmer to adopt certain land management practices such as nutrient management, waste utilization (which are components of an approved comprehensive nutrient management plan), integrated pest management, irrigation water management, air quality improvement, and wildlife habitat management.

There are also special provisions for beginning farmers, limited resource farmers, and historically underserved producers. In addition, farmers that have prior year EQIP contracts may be eligible to apply for this year's program to do additional conservation work.

The application period is open through COB February 27, 2009.

Persons interested in applying should contact the following USDA Service Centers, or visit our website at www.ct.nrcs.gov/programs.

Wallingford Service Center
(203)269-7509, ext#205

Dates to Remember

Feb 16,2009	FSA Office Closed in Observance of Washington's Birthday
Feb 27, 2009	Deadline for EQIP Applications
Feb 27, 2009	Deadline for 2005 – 2007 Crop Disaster Program Applications
March 15, 2009	NAP Sign-Up Deadline
Continues	Continuous Conservation Reserve program

Visit our Web site at
<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ct>

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its program and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

USDA Sets Date for Lamb Referendum

WASHINGTON, Dec 12, 2008 -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced that it will offer lamb producers, feeders, and first handlers the opportunity to vote in a nationwide referendum on whether to continue or terminate the Lamb Promotion, Research, and Information Order, authorized under the Commodity Promotion, Research, and Information Act of 1996. The referendum will be held Feb. 2-27, 2009.

The referendum will be conducted at USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) county offices. To be eligible to vote, persons must certify and provide documentation, such as a sales receipt or remittance form, which shows they have been engaged in the production, feeding, or slaughtering of lambs during the period, Jan. 1, 2008, through Dec. 31, 2008.

Beginning Feb. 2, 2009, and continuing through Feb. 27, 2009, persons eligible to vote should obtain form LS-86 from a county FSA office either in person, by mail, fax, or via the Internet at: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/lsmarketingprograms>. Persons must vote in the referendum at the County FSA office where their administrative farm records are maintained. For those persons not participating in FSA programs, the opportunity to vote will be provided at the County FSA office where the person owns or rents land.

Form LS-86 and supporting documentation must be returned in person, by mail, or by fax to the appropriate county FSA office. The form and documentation returned in person or by fax must be received in the appropriate county office prior to the close of business on Feb. 27, 2009. The form and documentation returned by mail must be postmarked no later than midnight on Feb. 27, 2009, and received in the county FSA office by March 6, 2009.

USDA monitors activities of the American Lamb Board. The mandatory program is financed by producers, seedstock producers (breeders), feeders, and exporters who are assessed one-half cent (\$.005) per pound when live ovine animals are sold. The first handler, primarily packers, pays an additional 30 cents per head on ovine animals purchased for slaughter.

Notice of the referendum will be published in the Dec. 16, 2008, Federal Register. Copies of the Final Rule and Notice are available from the Marketing Programs Branch; Livestock and Seed Program, AMS, USDA; STOP 0251 - Room 2628-S; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, D.C. 20250-0251; tel. (202) 720-1115; or via the Internet at www.ams.usda.gov/lsmarketingprograms.