



# Georgia Farm Service Agency Newsletter

April - May 2009

United States Department of Agriculture

Volume 6, Issue 2

## Important Dates calendar for FSA Programs

### Final Availability Dates for Loans and LDP's:

31-Mar	Wheat, Barley, Oats, Canola, Crambe, Flaxseed, Honey, Sesame Seed, Rape Seed
31-May	Cotton, Corn, Dry Peas, Grain Sorghum, Lentils, Mustard Seed, Safflower Seed, Small Chickpeas, Soybeans, Sunflower Seeds

### NAP Insurance Sales Closing Dates:

1-Dec	Honey
31-Jan	All annually planted crops, both spring and fall
15-Aug	Perennial crops, forage crops for hay and grazing, and all value loss crops

### Additional Program Deadlines:

Now	Inquire and Sign-up CRP Continuous Practices such as Riparian Buffers
Now	Emergency Conservation approved applicants -- report completed practices to FSA
1-Apr - 31-Aug	CRP Nesting Season
1-May	Deadline to report intended cotton acreage for BWEP without late fee
31-May-09	Deadline to report tobacco
1-Jun	Deadline to enroll into 2009 Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP)
15-Jul	Deadline to report spring/summer-seeded crops
1-Aug	Deadline for requesting the reconstitution of a farm with crop bases
1-Nov	Tobacco Buy Out Program Successor In Interest Contracts for 2010, as well as contract transfers between family members due to death of contract holder or moving "purchased" quota

**NOTE: If the crop being reported has NAP coverage, the final date to timely report the acreage is 15 days PRIOR to the onset of harvest or grazing. It is important for producers to remember that crops with NAP coverage will usually have a NAP crop reporting date EARLIER than the regularly established reporting dates for crops without NAP coverage.**

### Present Emergency Loan Application Deadlines in Georgia:

15-Apr-09	Designation S2741 in 3 counties for hail storms
27-Apr-09	Designation M1785 Amend. 2 in 5 counties for Tropical Storm Fay
27-Apr-09	Designation M1785 Amend. 3 in 2 counties for Tropical Storm Fay
29-Apr-09	Designation M1785 Amend. 4 in 2 counties for Tropical Storm Fay
1-May-09	Designation M1785 Amend. 5 in 4 counties due to Tropical Storm Fay
15-May-09	Designation S2755 in 13 counties due to drought and excessive heat
16-Jun-09	Designation M1785 Amend. 12 in 2 counties due to Tropical Storm Fay
8-Jun-09	Designation S2769 in 9 counties due to Tropical Storm Fay
29-Jun-09	Designation S2788 in 47 counties due to Tropical Storm Fay
1-Jul-09	Designation S2793 in 4 counties due to drought and excessive heat
1-Jul-09	Designation S2796 in 6 counties due to drought
12-Aug-09	Designation S2821 in 158 counties due to drought
12-Aug-09	Designation S2822 in 8 counties due to severe storm with wind and hail
5-Oct-09	Designation S2846 in 7 counties due to early frost
13-Oct-09	Designation S2850 in 13 counties due to drought

**NOTE: All producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office for information specific to the Emergency Loan Program and to determine whether their counties are declared under a certain designation.**



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## U.S. Agriculture Secretary Thomas Vilsack Addresses Group in Albany



U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Secretary Tom Vilsack  
speaking in Albany.

In his first speech outside of the Washington beltway, newly-appointed Secretary of Agriculture Thomas Vilsack addressed a group of local farmers in Albany, Georgia. Secretary Vilsack was the keynote speaker on February 21, 2009, at the 26th Annual Farmer's Conference hosted by the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund. Secretary Vilsack praised the group for their leadership and foresight in addressing topics important to agriculture such as sustainable agriculture, value added production along with discussions of carbon credits and forestation. Secretary Vilsack also recognized the Federation for its promotion of the Special Supplemental

Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, better known as the WIC program. Secretary Vilsack stated that food assistance programs would be an important component of the economic stimulus package.

Citing statistics from the recently released 2007 Census of Agriculture, Secretary Vilsack pointed out trends that indicate growth in the number of very small and very large farms while farms in the middle have lost ground. Secretary Vilsack used these trends to articulate the priorities of the new Obama Administration. "President Obama is very interested in trying to replenish, renew and have a renaissance in rural areas all across the Country." Secretary Vilsack laid out the following priorities for USDA.

"First, we have to figure out strategies to make those small income farms become mid-income farms. We have to figure out ways and strategies to maintain mid-size farms." Secretary Vilsack discussed the importance of focusing on nutrition -- fresh fruits, vegetables and nuts. Secretary Vilsack pointed out that many small farms are engaged in the production of fresh fruits and vegetables and that strategies need to be developed to create more ways to get these products into schools and institutions in local areas.

The Secretary also said USDA should focus on food safety issues and discussed the importance that food safety has on all of agriculture. Secretary Vilsack pointed out the need for all agencies to coordinate and modernize their systems. "I think we need to ultimately move into a consolidated system to ensure we have the very best food system -- food safety system -- in the country. This is a way of increasing opportunity and not depressing the market in certain categories."

Secretary Vilsack also pointed to the Energy Title of the Farm Bill and the

*(Continued on page 3)*



Claude J. Gordon, III, Farm Service Agency (FSA) Farm Loan Officer in Colquitt, GA, (left) and David F. Laster, Georgia FSA Acting State Executive Director, also attended the 26th Annual Farmers Conference.

## Georgia State FSA Newsletter

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David F. Laster, Acting

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Kula C. Moore

**Farm Loan Programs:**  
David F. Laster

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The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) is the main source for information contained in this educational newsletter. Eligibility and participation for all FSA programs is determined in accordance with FSA rules and regulations. Contact your local FSA Service Center to determine program eligibility.

The Georgia Farm Service Agency State Newsletter is published by the Georgia FSA State Office. Contact your local USDA Service Center - Farm Service Agency listed in the phone book, weekdays 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. to obtain a free subscription, make address corrections, or be removed from the mailing list.

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Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in any meeting/event/function should contact Kula C. Moore, 706-546-2269.

## Women in Agriculture Luncheon

Terrell County's USDA Service Center recently hosted its first "Women In Agriculture" luncheon. Farm Service Agency (FSA), the lead agency, was assisted by USDA's National Peanut Research Lab and Rural Development, and the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service.

Several local sponsors that provided donations, including gifts for door prizes, were Bank of Dawson, Southwest Georgia Farm Credit, McCleskey Cotton, Sasser 520 Peanuts, Locke Farm Center, Laing Hardware, Christie Feed & Seed, Georgia Farm Bureau, and Wilbur Gamble.



In addition to the Service Center staff, approximately 46 attended the luncheon. Among the Keynote presenters were Ms.

Linda Riggins, Coordinator/Organizer of the Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative (SRBWI); Sandra Gay, Georgia Cooperative Extension Service; and Charles Lamb, Terrell County Extension Director.

Ms. Riggins stressed the importance of women becoming more active in farming by planting small acres of vegetables. She also shared information on how women can market their produce through local farmers markets, schools, and grocery stores. She stated that the commercial kitchen located in Baker County is also available to women.

Ms. Gay brought helpful information on canning and freezing while Mr. Lamb provided helpful information on the need for soil testing and timing of planting.

Ms. Mary Porter, FSA's Terrell County Executive Director, welcomed the attendees and gave the program overview. Other USDA presenters included Ms. Fatima Jones, FSA's Farm Loan Manager in Dawson, and Ms. Debra Bell-Dison, Area Specialist with USDA's Rural Development. Both ladies presented valuable information to the group on programs offered through USDA as well as eligibility requirements.

A delicious meal was enjoyed which included chicken salad, 7-layer salad, baked potato salad, assorted desserts, and tea. Various door prizes were awarded during the luncheon.

The response from luncheon participants was very favorable. FSA looks forward to making this an annual event.



## U.S. Agriculture Secretary Thomas Vilsack Addresses Group in Albany

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need for creating new ways to produce bio-fuels. "We have got to develop a more independent source -- an American source -- and we can do this with our farm fields but we need resources to focus on new crops for bio-fuels. We need resources to help set-up bio-refineries." The Secretary also pointed out the need to focus on conservation and stewardship. "It is also clear that there is a great income opportunity for us to do the right thing with our land to protect our environment but to pay and compensate farmers accordingly for the use of their land for societal benefit -- that is a strategy." The Secretary also spoke of the need to develop a carbon system -- a cap and trade system -- to price carbon and reduce greenhouse gasses.

Secretary Vilsack also made it very clear to the group that he was at the meeting to send the message that USDA is serious about civil rights. He briefly outlined his plan to restructure and reorganize a portion of USDA. His plan called for elevating the Assistant Secretary of Administration to the Under Secretary level. This person "will be responsible for resolving current and recently filed claims and to try to figure out ways in which they can be resolved fairly and quickly." He also said, "USDA would hire a consulting firm to work with our various departments and various offices throughout the country to make sure that all procedures and all processes are fair to everybody."

Congressman Sanford Bishop was also in attendance along with several other USDA representatives.

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# Farm Programs

*Price Support/Compliance/GIS ~ Clark Weaver, Chief*

## **Report Livestock Deaths Due to Natural Disasters**

Previous Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Office newsletters have mentioned several new “supplemental” disaster programs that were included in the 2008 Farm Bill. One of these programs is the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) which is intended to provide compensation to eligible livestock owners and contract growers who suffer losses of their livestock due to adverse weather, as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture. Note: Production losses are NOT covered under this program; only losses due to deaths of livestock will be compensated.

Work on the final regulations, policy, and procedure has not yet been completed; but we do know that LIP will be available in Georgia for livestock deaths resulting from eligible natural disasters. That being said, the early March snowstorm, which most severely affected northeast Georgia, caused numerous chicken houses to collapse, resulting in the deaths to thousands of birds. This is the type of livestock loss the LIP program is designed to provide assistance for.

Until such time as policy and procedure are developed and a sign-up is announced for LIP, affected livestock owners or contract growers should contact their local FSA office and provide a timely notice of the damage and estimate of livestock deaths. Having this information on file will allow the county FSA office to contact interested producers when LIP is fully implemented.

## **Farm Facility Loans for Hay Storage Facilities**

Many Georgia producers have been anticipating sign-up for the new Farm Facility Loan Program for Hay Storage facilities. Unfortunately, an environmental assessment must be completed before this program can be implemented. Farm Service Agency’s (FSA) Washington Office has just met with the FSA people responsible for this and the contract should be awarded by the end of the month. Hay will NOT be an eligible commodity until the Environmental Assessment is completed AND the final regulations are published. At this time, late summer is an estimated time line for loan availability for hay storage structures.

If you are anticipating constructing a hay storage facility and you think you may need a loan, we ask that you do

not start a hay structure prior to the program start date. Producers should remember that any facility over \$50,000.00 will require real-estate plus the structure for security.

We cannot accept any applications until the program is implemented.

If you have further question, please contact Jeannia Satcher at 706-546-2256.

## **IRS Forms 1099 from FSA**

If you have received a 1099 form for Farm Service Agency (FSA) program payments for 2008 and you question the validity, please verify by comparing the 1099 with your personal records. After verifying payments, you may contact the local FSA office. You will need to provide them with the incorrect amounts. They can review contract payments and determine if a corrected 1099 should be issued. The local county office is responsible for contacting our Kansas City Office to process the corrections. However, these corrections must be processed in Kansas City.

## **Sodbuster, Swampbuster**

Most Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs require compliance with sodbuster and swampbuster provisions. These provisions require producers to follow an approved conservation system on all highly erodible land planted to an annual crop as determined by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Be sure to have determinations made on any new land you plan to plant to annual crops. If you plan to plant a different crop on your current cropland, check with FSA and NRCS to assure the new crop will qualify under your conservation system.

Swampbuster provisions state that converting a wetland to make possible the planting of a crop will result in the loss of all USDA benefits. To avoid this possibility it is strongly recommended that producers check with FSA and NRCS before starting to work in the fields.



# Farm Programs

*Production Adjustment/Conservation/Common Provisions ~ Brett Martin, Chief*

## **Foreign Land Owners Reporting Requirements**

Foreign investors who hold agricultural land need to understand the requirements of the Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) of 1978. This law requires foreign investors who buy, sell or hold a direct or indirect interest in U.S. agricultural land to report their holdings and transactions to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture.

Agricultural land is defined as land used for forestry production, farming, ranching or timber production. Failure to meet the filing requirements can result in a penalty with fines up to 25 percent of the fair market value of the agricultural land.

All individuals who are not U.S. citizens, or citizens of the Northern Mariana Islands or the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands must report. Also, individuals who are not lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence or who are not paroled into the United States under the Immigration and Nationality Act must report. Organizations created under the laws of a foreign government or which has its principal place of business outside the United States must also report. In addition, any U.S. organization in which a significant interest or substantial control is directly or indirectly held by foreign individuals, organizations or governments must report.

Significant interest or substantial control is defined as 10 percent or more. All foreign Governments must report their holdings and transactions.

The USDA Farm Service Agency has been designated to collect the AFIDA reports (Form FSA-153). Completed forms must be returned to the FSA County Office where the land is located or where the programs are administered. For more details on reporting requirements, contact your local Farm Service Agency County Office.

## **Practice CP36, Longleaf Pines**

Georgia has been allocated an additional 20,000 acres for use in the continuous enrollment in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) to benefit longleaf pines. Natural stands of longleaf pine have declined, and today occupy less than 4 million acres of the original range of this species. Longleaf pine forests benefit numerous species of wildlife and can provide significant environmental benefits.

Currently, in Georgia, we have enrolled 64,750 acres in practice CP36. The additional 20,000 acres will allow Georgia FSA County Committees to reach more landowners in the State. CRP participants will receive a signing incentive payment (SIP)

of \$100 per acre for enrollment in the program, plus the regular 50 percent cost share to establish the longleaf pine tree seedling, and an additional 40 percent practice incentive payment (PIP) that equates to a 90 percent cost share. In addition, an annual rental payment based on the county average soil rental rate will be made yearly for 10 to 15 years based on the contract length.

For more information about practice CP36 or the Conservation Reserve Program, please contact your local County FSA Office, or visit our FSA website [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov) and click on Conservations programs.

## **CRP Carbon Sequestration Credits**

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) participants may sell carbon sequestration credits associated with land enrolled in CRP. The selling of carbon sequestration credits is not, therefore, a violation of the CRP-1 (contract). For more information visit our FSA website a [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov) and click on Conservation Programs.

## **Flexible or Cash Lease**

Producers should be careful to differentiate between flexible leases and cash leases when reporting to the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Flexible leases, in which the producer pays a base rent, and offers a variable bonus on yield and/or price increase to a landowner, may be considered by the Farm Service Agency as shared leases. Cash leases specifying a fixed amount, not subject to changes from yield or price are common and the norm across the country. Flexible or hybrid leases are now coming to the attention of FSA.

Each year FSA participants complete form CCC-902 Continuation Sheet for changes affecting Leased or Owned Land. The form is subject to be spot checked. Paying more than what the original lease specifies may violate a producer's CCC-902, if not completed correctly. A violation could make an operator ineligible for Direct Counter-cyclical Payments (DCP).

Example: A lease that is for \$100 per acre plus an additional \$40 per acre if the crop exceeds \$4/bushel or 170 bushels corn/acre or \$7/bushel or 40 bushels of soybeans per acre is by FSA procedure a share lease. FSA procedure states that, a lease is a share lease if the lease bases the amount of rent on a quantity of the crop produced or the proceeds from the crop, or the interest a producer would have if the crop had been produced.

# Farm Loan Programs

David Laster, Chief

## Recovery Act Allocates Millions for Direct Operating Loans

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, commonly known as the “stimulus bill,” provided \$173 million for FSA’s Direct Farm Operating Loan Program. Nationwide, more than 2000 approved loans were immediately obligated. In Georgia, this allowed 60 approved direct operating loans totaling \$4.1 million to be immediately funded. All remaining funds will be allocated through approved loans until funds have been expended.

In keeping with the President’s goal for the Recovery Act, this loan funding is intended for proper investment into the agricultural sector, to benefit both family farmers and rural economies. The Recovery Act was designed to preserve or create millions of jobs throughout the country and these loans help ensure that recipients remain financially viable and local agricultural businesses benefit from direct purchases.

## Loans for Socially Disadvantaged Persons

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) makes and guarantees loans to eligible socially disadvantaged applicants (SDA) to buy and operate family-size farms and ranches. Each fiscal year, the Agency targets a portion of its direct and guaranteed farm ownership (FO) and operating loan (OL) funds to SDA farmers. Non-reserved funds can also be used by SDA persons.

An SDA group is a group whose members have been subject to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities. These groups consist of American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African-Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, and women.

The Agency:

- Helps remove barriers that prevent full participation of SDA farmers in FSA’s farm loan programs; and
- Provides information and assistance to SDA farmers to help them develop sound farm

management practices, analyze problems, and plan the best use of available resources essential for success.

Direct farm ownership loans (FO) and farm operating loans (OL) are made by FSA to eligible farmers. Guaranteed FO and OL loans are made by lending institutions subject to Federal or State supervision (banks, savings and loans, and units of the Farm Credit System) and guaranteed by FSA. Typically, FSA guarantees 90 percent of any loss the lender might incur if the loan fails. FO funds may be used to purchase or enlarge a farm or ranch, purchase easements or rights of way needed in the farm’s operation, erect or improve buildings, implement soil and water conservation measures, and pay closing costs. Guaranteed FO funds may also be used to refinance debt.

OL funds may be used to purchase livestock, poultry, farm equipment, feed, seed, fuel, fertilizer, chemicals, insurance, and other operating expenses. The funds also may be used for borrower training costs, closing costs, and to reorganize and refinance debt.

Repayment terms for direct operating loans depend on the collateral securing the loan and usually run from 1 to 7 years. Repayment terms for direct farm ownership loans vary but never exceed 40 years.

Interest rates are set periodically according to the Government’s cost of borrowing. Guaranteed loan terms are set by the lender. Interest rates for guaranteed loans are established by the lender.

For additional information interested persons should contact their local FSA office.

*FSA Offices will be closed on the following holidays:*

May 25 .....	Memorial Day
July 3 ...	Independence Day (observed)
September 7 .....	Labor Day
October 12 .....	Columbus Day
November 11 .....	Veterans Day
November 26 .....	Thanksgiving Day
December 25 .....	Christmas Day

# Locate your FSA County Offices

COUNTY	LOCATION	PHONE
APPLING	Baxley	912-367-6684
ATKINSON-WARE	Pearson	912-422-3363
BACON	Alma	912-632-4611
BAKER	Newton	229-734-5272
BEN HILL	Fitzgerald	229-423-2041
BERRIEN	Nashville	229-686-5557
BLECKLEY-PULASKI-TWIGGS	Cochran	478-934-6571
BROOKS	Quitman	229-263-4116
BULLOCH	Statesboro	912-871-2600
BURKE	Waynesboro	706-554-2109
CALHOUN-DOUGHERTY	Morgan	229-849-2415
CANDLER	Metter	912-685-2635
CARROLL-COWETA-DOUGLAS-FULTON-HARALSON-HEARD-MERIWETHER-PAULDING-TROUP	Carrollton	770-834-2097
COFFEE	Douglas	912-384-4811
COLQUITT	Moultrie	229-985-6509
COOK	Adel	229-896-3206
CRISP	Cordele	229-273-4148
DECATUR	Bainbridge	229-246-5773
DODGE	Eastman	478-374-2531
DOOLY	Vienna	229-268-4131
EARLY	Blakely	229-723-3193
EFFINGHAM-BRYAN-CHATHAM	Springfield	912-754-6664
ELBERT-OGLETHORPE	Elberton	706-283-3021
EMANUEL	Swainsboro	478-237-8866
FLOYD-POLK	Rome	706-291-5654
GORDON-BARTOW-CHEROKEE-COBB-MURRAY-PICKENS-WHITFIELD	Calhoun	706-629-2582
GRADY	Cairo	229-377-1607
HALL-DAWSON-FORSYTH-HABERSHAM-LUMPKIN-RABUN-STEPHENS-WHITE	Gainesville	770-536-0549
HART-FRANKLIN	Hartwell	706-376-5451
HENRY-BUTTS-CLAYTON-FAYETTE-SPALDING	McDonough	770-957-7473
HOUSTON	Perry	478-987-2271
IRWIN	Ocilla	229-468-7491
JACKSON-BANKS-MADISON	Commerce	706-335-8111
JEFF DAVIS	Hazelhurst	912-375-2015
JEFFERSON-GLASCOCK	Louisville	478-625-7771
JENKINS	Millen	478-982-4281

COUNTY	LOCATION	PHONE
LAMAR-MONROE-PIKE-UPSON	Barnesville	770-358-0787
LAURENS-WILKINSON	Dublin	478-272-1757
LEE	Leesburg	229-759-9267
LOWNDES-CLINCH-ECHOLS-LANIER	Valdosta	229-242-0575
MACON	Oglethorpe	478-472-7012
MARION-CHATTAHOOCHEE-HARRIS-MUSCOGEE-TALBOT	Buena Vista	229-649-4495
MCDUFFIE-COLUMBIA-RICHMOND-WARREN	Thomson	706-595-1339
MILLER	Colquitt	229-758-5219
MITCHELL	Camilla	229-336-0171
MONTGOMERY-TREUTLEN	Mount Vernon	912-583-4541
MORGAN-GREENE-JASPER-NEWTON	Madison	706-342-1353
OCONEE-BARROW-CLARKE	Watkinsville	706-769-3987
PEACH-BIBB-CRAWFORD	Byron	478-956-6484
PIERCE-BRANTLEY-CHARLTON	Blackshear	912-449-5303
PUTNAM-BALDWIN-JONES	Eatonton	706-485-2341
RANDOLPH-CLAY-QUITMAN	Cuthbert	229-732-3001
SCREVEN	Sylvania	912-564-7101
SEMINOLE	Donalsonville	229-524-2434
SUMTER-SCHLEY	Americus	229-924-4056
TATTNALL-EVANS	Reidsville	912-557-6706
TAYLOR	Butler	478-862-3645
TELFAIR-WHEELER	McRae	229-868-5696
TERRELL	Dawson	229-995-5811
THOMAS	Thomasville	229-226-3462
TIFT	Tifton	229-382-2775
TOOMBS	Lyons	912-526-6154
TURNER	Ashburn	229-567-3304
UNION-FANNIN-GILMER-TOWNS	Blairsville	706-745-2012
WALKER-CATOOSA-CHATTOOGA-DADE	LaFayette	706-638-1558
WALTON-DEKALB-GWINNETT-ROCKDALE	Monroe	770-267-8363
WASHINGTON-HANCOCK-JOHNSON	Sandersville	478-552-6071
WAYNE-CAMDEN-GLYNN-LIBERTY-LONG-MCINTOSH	Jesup	912-427-2502
WEBSTER-STEWART	Preston	229-828-2015
WILCOX	Rochelle	229-365-2231
WILKES-LINCOLN-TALIAFERRO	Washington	706-678-2630
WORTH	Sylvester	229-776-6985

Georgia Farm Service Agency  
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Producers are reminded when they have an address change due to 911 upgrades or relocation, to please contact your local FSA office to update your address.

### ***Public's Help Needed to Locate Harmful Weed***

The Georgia Forestry Commission is asking for the public's help to stop a harmful weed from spreading statewide. Cogongrass is a non-native weed that has taken over millions of acres in the southeast. It flourishes in numerous soil types, and suppresses and eliminates natural vegetation, thereby significantly reducing tree and plant regeneration, wildlife habitat, forage and ecological diversity. It is extremely flammable and difficult to eradicate, due to its dense mats and tremendous root system.

Cogongrass was first introduced into the United States near Grand Bay, Alabama, in 1911 via seed packing material in shipping containers from Japan. It has spread throughout Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida and has now been found in 28 Georgia counties.

The grass is most easily recognized in the spring flowering and seeding period (March through May in Georgia) when the white fluffy seeds are produced and dispersed. Cogongrass has sharp pointed, scaly rhizomes with a very dense root system, and grows in a circular-shaped pattern. It also has an off-centered midrib on leaf blades that measure between one and five feet.

In 2008, the Georgia Forestry Commission and a diverse group of government and private agencies established The Cogongrass Cooperative Weed Management Area for Georgia. It is a formal partnership to combat the invasive weed.

“Our purpose as a group is to address the short and long term negative effects of Cogongrass in Georgia,” said Robert Farris, Director of the Georgia Forestry Commission. “We want the public to report sightings of this dangerous weed so that our teams of professionals can take the necessary measures to bring this threat under control.”

Residents who suspect they have found Cogongrass should contact their local Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) office and avoid mowing or disking through or near the area to avoid further spread. Photographs and more information about Cogongrass can be found on the GFC website at [www.GaTrees.org](http://www.GaTrees.org).