

Your Farm Service Agency Online Monthly Newsletter Covering the Latest Topics

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Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack visits Hawaii

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack's recent trip to Hawaii was a power packed itinerary including an address to the American Farm Bureau Federation members, a visit to Pearl Harbor to highlight the Obama Administration's commitment to renewable energy, the unveiling of the department's "Blueprint for Stronger Service" plan to streamline costs while increasing efficiency within the USDA as well as a visit to the Farm Service Agency (FSA) Honolulu County Office in Aiea, and a Town Hall Forum.

American Farm Bureau Federation

During his address to the annual meeting of the American Farm Bureau Federation, the Secretary emphasized, "Agriculture and rural America matter, and no group understands that better than the men and women who lead Farm Bureau." Secretary Vilsack credited agriculture with providing one in every 12 jobs in America, and that last year American agricultural exports amounted to \$137.4 billion, which led to a \$42 billion farm trade surplus and direct support for more than 1 million American jobs.

(For more information on the Secretary's American Farm Bureau Federation address [Click Here](#))

Blueprint for Stronger Service

Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack outlined a number of changes aimed at reducing costs for the department, including FSA. The plan, called "Blueprint for Stronger Service" will involve planned

closing and consolidating of offices and streamlining services, all with an aim toward reducing costs while boosting efficiency.

He explained that budget cutting has already trimmed from 9 to 18% across different parts of USDA. Perhaps the most impact on farmers and ranchers will be the proposed closing of 131 Farm Service Agency offices across the country, thirty-five of those offices had no employees. "That meant that someone would go into that office but was not there all the time," Vilsack says. "The work will be transferred...it will be done in another place. We won't sacrifice the quality of the work we do, and the farmer will work with the same person as before, but perhaps will have to drive farther."

There are NO proposed Farm Service Agency office closures in Hawaii or the Pacific Basin.

(For more information on the Blueprint for Stronger Service [Click here](#) for a full USDA press release)



Hawaii & Pacific Basin Farm Service Agency Offices:

Hawaii & Pacific Basin FSA State Office

737 Bishop St, Ste 2340
Honolulu, HI 96813
Ph: (808)441-2704
Fax: (808)441-2705

Hawaii County FSA Hilo

154 Waiuanue Ave,
Rm 102
Hilo, HI 96720
Ph: (808)933-8381 x 1
Fax: (808)933-8345

Kona

The Kona Office is closed until further notice - Please call 933-8381 x 1 for service or information

Honolulu County FSA

99-193 Aiea Heights Dr,
Suite 114
Aiea, HI 96701
Ph: (808)483-8600 x 2
Fax: (808)483-8615

Kauai County FSA

4334 Rice St, Rm 103
Lihue, HI 96766
Ph: (808)245-9014 x 2
Fax: (808)246-4639

Maui County FSA

77 Hookele St, Ste 201
Kahului, HI 96732
Ph: (808)871-5500 x 2
Fax: (808)873-6183

Guam FSA Office

400 Route 8, Ste 306
Mongmong, GU 96910
Ph: (671)472-7568
Fax: (671)472-7580

American Samoa FSA

Pago Plaza Bldg, Ste 213
Pago Pago, AS 96799
Ph: (684)633-1031 x121
Fax: (684)633-7614

Hours

Monday—Friday
8:00 am—4:00 pm

Website

www.fsa.usda.gov/hi



Pearl Harbor: Renewable Energy and Biofuels

Highlighting the Obama Administration’s commitment to renewable energy at the Pearl Harbor Memorial Center, Vilsack visited the World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument’s Pearl Harbor Visitor Center (on Tuesday 1/10) to talk about how USDA is working with the U.S. Navy to promote the use of renewable fuels in its operations. In April 2009, the Pearl Harbor naval base first made use of biodiesel in its marine fleet, replacing U.S. Navy-operated tour boats that shuttled visitors to and from the USS Arizona Memorial with five new boats capable of running on 100% biodiesel. Secretary Vilsack highlighted these efforts as well as other Administration efforts to advance renewable energy development and utilization.

(For the entire press release regarding the USDA's Renewable Energy projects at Pearl Harbor [Click Here](#))

Town Hall Forum with Rural, Business and Agricultural Stakeholders

During a candid Town Hall Forum with rural, business and agricultural stakeholders, Secretary Vilsack boasted the myriad of contributions that the United States Department of Agriculture has been able to contribute; including farm and home loans, broadband internet services that are enhancing public safety within the County of Hawaii, as well as waste water treatment plants and the promotion of a bio economy.

Secretary Vilsack got down to the business of responding to comments and questions from participants acknowledging that continued research is critical for all agriculture from traditional and unique food crops to biomass for biofuels. He noted that Congressional budget constraints is an opportunity to rethink, reshape and improve programs and systems. Time is now to forge public/private partnerships; support the entry of young producers into the industry; and manage the change before us. In closing, Secretary Vilsack urged all producers – be they organic, conventional or biotech – to work together to promote agriculture and to building stronger local food systems by educating consumers about what value the agriculture industry brings to their families and businesses.

Dates to Remember

Jan. 27, 2012	Kona Coffee Farmer Association Expo, FSA booth (Hawaii County)
Jan. 30, 2012	Sign-up ends for payment applications for LIP and LFP
Jan. 30, 2012	Deadline for sign-up application, notice of loss, and supporting documentation for 2011 ELAP
Feb. 8, 2012	UH-CTAHR Risk Management Workshop, Hawaii Okinawa Center (Oahu) Honolulu County office to present on FSA Risk Management Programs and Farm Loan Programs
Feb. 20, 2012	Presidents Day Holiday, FSA offices closed
May 28, 2012	Memorial Day Holiday, FSA offices closed
June 1, 2012	Deadline to file for SURE 2010
Ongoing	Hawaii CREP (Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program) Signup

New Year's Resolution- CONSERVATION

Across Hawaii our waters and coral reefs continue to degrade. High nutrient and sediment runoff deteriorates coral reef habitat and decreases the diversity of our aquatic species. Diminishing native forests contribute to the declining water quantity and quality. Invasive species continue to thrive while endangered species and native forests decline.

The good news: USDA's Farm Service Agency, in cooperation with federal partner NRCS (Natural Resource Conservation Service), and state partner DLNR/DOFAW (Department of Land and Natural Resources/Department of Forestry and Wildlife), offers a conservation program to help local landowners improve native habitats along streams, including intermittent streams.

The Hawaii Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (Hawaii CREP) provides cost share payments and yearly rental payments to landowners and farm operators to establish conservation practices which improve water quality and quantity, enhance coral reefs and the diversity of aquatic species, and provide for wildlife and endangered species habitats.

Hawaii CREP's riparian buffer practice allows the land owner to plant tree buffers up to 1,320 feet wide along the stream. A key component in the buffers is the establishment of native trees and shrubs. Establishing native forested areas is the most cost effective and efficient way to absorb rainwater and replenish groundwater, and forests absorb moisture from rainfall and passing clouds thus increasing groundwater recharge. Forested buffers filter sediment and other pollutants reducing runoff into the coral reefs.

Hawaii CREP also requires and provides cost share on fencing to keep feral ungulates out of the project area. Without this protection, invasive ungulates would trample and devour vegetation, leaving the bare ground and openings for alien plants that consume more water and increase runoff.

If your New Year's resolution is conservation and you wish to get more information on Hawaii CREP, call your local Farm Service Agency office. Ask about Hawaii CREP and the forested stream buffer, Practice CP-22.



District Director, Henry Fong (right) poses with USDA Undersecretary Michael Scuse (left) marking 40 years since he began work for the Department

District Director Recognized for 40 years of Service

Michael Scuse, Undersecretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, awarded Henry Fong a certificate for completing 40 years of service with the Hawaii and Pacific Basin Farm Service Agency (FSA). Along with the certificate, Henry was given an engraved crystal ice bucket. Henry, who has served as District Director since 1991, began as a County Executive Director (CED), for what was then called the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS). He served as CED for Honolulu, Kauai and Maui Counties and has worked under 7 of the 9 State Executive Directors in Hawaii.

Many things have changed within FSA since Henry began working in 1972. One of the changes Henry has noticed is that employees have gotten younger. "When I began there were 14 employees in the whole operation including the state office. I became the 15th. I was the youngest employee by eleven years. Now I'm the oldest. I guess if you stay in one place long enough it's bound to happen," he laughed.

According to Henry, one thing has not changed, "FSA still emphasizes customer service, and our employees will go that extra mile to help eligible producers understand and participate in the programs we administer." In addition, Henry says, "Many aspects of our programs are still in the hands of farmer-elected Committee persons, and it is this grass-roots system that has and continues to influence implementation of our programs."

Henry Fong continues to serve FSA as one of those customer service focused employees who will go that extra mile. **Thank you Henry for your continued service!**

Secretary Visits Honolulu County Office



January 10th, the Honolulu County FSA Office staff got a rare treat when USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack and State Executive Director Diane Ley dropped by their offices in Aiea, Hawaii for a short talk story session with the Secretary and his delegation. (L to R: Shar Hamamoto, Melissa Rodrigues, SED Diane Ley, Secretary Tom Vilsack, TJ Nii, Jason Shitanishi, Theresa Correa and Gwen Zakahi)

Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE)

The sign-up for recovery payment for 2010 losses under the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE) runs through **June 1, 2012**.

SURE provides benefits for farm revenue losses due to natural disasters and is available to eligible producers on:

Farms in counties with Secretarial disaster declarations, including contiguous counties, that have incurred crop production or quality losses, or both, and includes all crops grown by a producer nationwide, except grazed crops.

Any farm in which, for the crop year, the actual production on the farm because of disaster-related conditions is 50 percent or less than normal production of the farm.

Remember to Retain Your Receipts for 2012 Reimbursement Transportation Cost Program: For more information on the RTCP program visit your local county office or www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport.

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 Farm Service Agency 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 verifiable according to Agency specification. NAP losses must be reported within 15 days of loss.

Greater Flexibility and Additional Tools for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

On January 20, 2012, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) Administrator Bruce Nelson announced a new rule that expands loan opportunities for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, while also establishing a new Land Contract Guarantee Program. The rule provides additional flexibility allowing FSA loan officers to consider all prior farming experience, including on-the-job training and formal education, when determining eligibility for FSA for farm operating and ownership loans. It also expands a previous pilot program, the Land Contract Guarantee Program, from six states to all 50 states. This program is designed to encourage farmers and ranchers to sell their property to beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers through the use of seller financing.

The changes in eligibility will increase access for farmers and ranchers to FSA loans and credit assistance. The new rule enables landowners to sell their farmland to the next generation on a contract for deed with a 90-percent guarantee against losses to the seller. Farm Service Agency is committed to helping the next generation of America's farmers and ranchers participate in our nation's agricultural economy.

U.S. agriculture is currently experiencing its most productive period in decades thanks to the productivity, resiliency, and resourcefulness of America's producers. The improvements outlined will help producers and businesses maintain this competitive edge.

Hawaii County is Designated as a Primary Natural Disaster Area

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has designated Hawaii County as a primary natural disaster area due to losses caused by drought that occurred from January 1, 2011, and ran throughout the year.

“Farmers and ranchers in Hawaii County have experienced severe drought conditions this past year,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “President Obama and I realize that during this time of disaster, federal assistance will be needed until conditions improve, as producers strive to recover their losses.”

Hawaii County was designated a natural disaster area on January 18, 2012, making all qualified farm operators in the designated area eligible for low interest Emergency (EM) loans from USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA), provided eligibility requirements are met. Farmers in the eligible county have eight months from the date of the declaration to apply for loans to help cover part of their actual losses. Farm Service Agency will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability. The Agency has a variety of programs, in addition to the EM loan program, to help eligible farmers recover from adversity.

USDA also has made other programs available to assist farmers and ranchers, including the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE), which was approved as part of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008; the Emergency Conservation Program; Federal Crop Insurance; and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program. Interested farmers may contact their local USDA Service Centers for further information on eligibility requirements and application procedures for these and other programs. Additional information is also available online at <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov>.

Secretary Vilsack also reminds producers that the department’s authority to operate the 5 disaster assistance programs authorized by the 2008 Farm Bill expired on September 30, 2011. This includes SURE; the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP); the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish (ELAP); the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP); and the Tree Assistance Program (TAP). Production losses in Hawaii County are covered because the event triggering the loss occurred prior to the expiration of these programs; however, production losses due to disasters occurring after September 30, 2011, are not eligible for disaster program coverage.

Interest Rates for January 2012	
Farm Operating - Direct	1.50%
Farm Ownership - Direct	3.50%
Farm Ownership - Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.500%
Emergency	3.50%
Limited Resource	5.000%



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