December 2011

Boundary/Bonner County
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Hours
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County Committee

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County Committee Elections

Ballots for this year's county committee election were due December 5. Ballots will be counted in the next few weeks and the new committee members will be announced in January.

County committee members play a vital role in the funding and operation of FSA programs.

New county committee members provide input and make important decisions on the local administration of disaster and conservation programs. With better participation in recent years, we have also seen promising increases in the number of women and minority candidates, helping to better represent the richness of Idaho agriculture.

County committee members provide a link between the agricultural community and USDA. Farmers and ranchers elected to county committees help deliver FSA programs at the local level, applying their knowledge and judgment to make decisions on commodity price support programs; conservation programs; incentive indemnity and disaster programs for some commodities; emergency programs and eligibility. FSA committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws. We look forward to welcoming the new committee members.

2012 DCP/ACRE Sign-up

2012 Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP) enrollment begins Jan. 23, 2012 and ends June 1, 2012.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

- All producers planting on **DCP base** acres must be identified on the DCP/ACRE contract and receive a proportionate share of DCP/ACRE payment for the farm.
- Changes on the farm after enrolling June 1st in DCP/ACRE **must** be reported to your local FSA office such as: Ownership changes, Producer changes (Individuals and Entities, Change in crop shares arrangements.

No changes are allowed after Sept. 30, 2012.

- No advance direct payments are available for 2012.

Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE)

The sign-up for 2010 losses in the SURE program runs through **June 1, 2012.**

The Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE) provides benefits for farm revenue losses due to natural disasters that incurred in the crop year 2010. SURE is available to eligible producers with qualifying losses on:

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- 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.

Farm Loan Programs

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, 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.

Farm ownership loans or farm operating loans may be obtained as direct loans for a maximum of up to $300,000. Guaranteed loans have a maximum limit of $1,214,000.

The one-time loan origination fee charged on FSA guaranteed loans has increased from 1 percent to 1.5 percent of the guaranteed portion of the loan, for loans obligated after October 1, 2011.

To find out more about FSA loan programs, contact the county office staff.

LDPs for Unshorn Lamb Pelts & Wool

Eligible producers have until Jan. 31, 2012, to apply for Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP) for unshorn pelts & wool produced during the 2011 crop year.

Eligible producers must have beneficial interest in the pelts, owned the lamb for at least 30 calendar days before the date of slaughter and sell the unshorn lamb for immediate slaughter. Producers must also comply with wetland conservation and highly erodible land conservation provisions on all lands they operate or have interest in.

To qualify for payment, pelts must have been produced by an eligible producer from live unshorn lambs of domestic origin in the United States.

Wool is also eligible for Market Assistance Loans (MALS).

Disaster Assistance Programs

FSA disaster assistance programs include:

- Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish (ELAP)
- Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP)
- Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)
- Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments (SURE) Program
- Tree Assistance Program (TAP)

To be eligible for the SURE, TAP and ELAP programs, producers must have purchased catastrophic risk protection insurance for all insurable crops, and NAP coverage for non-insurable crops.

Sign-up ends Jan. 30, 2012, for LFP, LIP, and ELAP. Producers have 90 days from the time a loss is apparent to file an application for TAP.

Farm-Raised Fish means all fish being produced for sale by an eligible producer. In the case of honey, the term "farm" means all bees and beehives in all counties that are intended to be harvested for a honey crop by the eligible producer.

Producers who meet the definition of Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource or Beginning Farmer or Rancher are not required to purchase the catastrophic insurance or NAP.

IRS Form 1099-G

Producers receive CCC-1099-Gs annually detailing payments from the Commodity Credit Corporation. The annual report of program payments on the CCC-1099-G is a service intended to help FSA customers report taxable income. It is not intended to replace the producers' responsibility to report income to the IRS.

FSA staff cannot interpret IRS regulations or advise producers about which payments to report on their income tax returns. However, county office staff can review payments for accuracy of data.

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 United States Department of Agriculture

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Commodity Loans

Commodity loans, also referred to as Marketing Assistance Loans, are available to producers who share in the risk of producing the crop. To be eligible, you must maintain beneficial interest in the crop through the time of application. Once beneficial interest in a commodity is lost, the commodity is ineligible for a loan — even if you regain beneficial interest.

Violating provisions of a marketing assistance loan may trigger administrative actions, such as assessing liquidated damages, calling the loan and denial of future farm-stored loans. The most common violations are removing or disposing of a commodity being used as loan collateral without prior authorization and providing an incorrect quantity on certification.

Maintaining Grain Quality

Bins are ideally designed to hold a level volume of grain. When bins are overfilled and grain is heaped up, airflow is hindered and the chance of spoilage increases.

Producers who take out marketing assistance loans and use the farm-stored grain as collateral should remember that they are responsible for maintaining the quality of the grain through the term of the loan.

Unauthorized Grain Disposition

If loan grain has been disposed of through feeding, selling or any other form of disposal without prior written authorization from the county office staff, it is considered unauthorized disposition. The financial penalties for unauthorized dispositions are severe and a producer's name will be placed on a loan violation list for a two-year period. Always call FSA before you haul or use any grain under a commodity loan.

Loans for the Socially Disadvantaged

FSA has a number of loan programs available to assist applicants to begin or continue in agriculture production. Loans are available for operating type loans and/or purchase or improve farms or ranches.

While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, the FSA has provided priority funding for Socially Disadvantaged Applicants.

A socially disadvantaged applicant is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of his or her identity as members of a group.

FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere.

Spousal Signatures

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, where 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.

Hispanic and Women Farmers

A process to resolve the claims of Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers who believe they were discriminated against when seeking USDA farm loans has been established.

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.

For additional information on this and other settlement issues contact:

Hispanic and Women Farmer Claims Process:
www.farmerclaims.gov or
1-888-508-4429

Pigford – The Black Farmers Discrimination Litigation:
www.blackfarmercase.com or
1-866-950-5547

Keepseagle - The Native American Farmers Class Action Settlement:
www.IndianFarmClass.com or
1-888-233-5506

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USDA United States Department of Agriculture

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NRCS - December 16, 2011 Cut0off for EQIP and WHIP Conservation Programs

Idaho NRCS has announced cutoff dates for the general signup for two of their conservation programs, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP). EQIP is a voluntary Farm Bill program that helps agricultural producers complete natural resource conservation projects and make conservation-related management changes on their farms or ranches. In 2011, Idaho NRCS received 970 applications of which 359 were funded. A total of $13.8 million was provided in financial assistance for conservation practices on over 274,000 acres of agricultural land.

WHIP is also a voluntary Farm Bill program for landowners. It provides financial and technical assistance so that agricultural producers can establish or improve wildlife habitat on private property. Program priorities are restoration of native vegetation on riparian, wetland, shrub/steppe and grassland habitats.

While application for either of these program may be filed at any time, only applications received by December 16, 2011 will be evaluated for this specific round of funding. Additional cutoff dates will be announced for the Sage-grouse as well as other initiatives when funding becomes available. For questions, please contact Elliot Traher, Acting Assistant State Conservationist – Program at 208.378.5703 or stop by your local USDA service center or visit NRCS online at http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/.

Selected Interest Rates for December 2011	
90-Day Treasury Bill	0.125%
Farm Operating - Direct	1.5%
Farm Ownership - Direct	3.375%
Farm Ownership - Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.5%
Emergency	1.5%

Dates to Remember	
Dec. 5	COC Ballots due back in County Office by COB
Jan. 23	2012 DCP Enrollment begins
Jan. 30	Sign-up ends Jan. 30, 2012, for LFP, LIP, and ELAP.
Jan. 31	Deadline to apply for Unshorn Lamb Pelts Loan Deficiency Payment
Mar. 15	NAP Signup Ends for Spring Planted Crops

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