



**November  
2012**

## Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Visits Maine

### Maine State FSA Office

**Donovan E. Todd**  
State Executive  
Director

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#### Hours

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

### Maine FSA Staff

**Deborah J. Dufour,**  
Farm Loan Chief

**Ken Gustin,**  
Program Specialist/  
Executive Officer

**William E. Jordan,**  
District Director

### Maine State Committee

**Annie Allen, Chair**  
**Anthony Carroll**  
**Jackie Lundeen**  
**Sandra Nutting**  
**Ralph Turner**

Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Kathleen Merrigan visited the Common Ground Fair on Sunday as a part of her visit to Maine. While at the Fair, the Deputy Secretary met with Leaders from four USDA Agencies (right) as well as numerous Maine organic farmers and gardeners.

Merrigan discussed organic farming as well as the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Initiative, which is part of an important movement to connect consumers with the Farmers who grow their food. For more information on the Initiative, including case studies, resources and programs, and an interactive map of projects by state, visit [www.usda.gov/KYFcompass](http://www.usda.gov/KYFcompass).

With an estimated 59,000 people attending over the three days, the 2012 Common Ground Fair had the highest attendance in the Fair's 35-year history including over 600 farms and businesses taking part. The Fair is organized by the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association.



*USDA Leaders at the Common Ground Fair (left to right): USDA Rural Development State Director Virginia Manuel; Maine Congresswoman Chellie Pingree; USDA Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan (holding vegetables from State Office People's Garden); USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist Juan Hernandez; USDA Farm Service State Executive Director Don Todd III; and USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service Director Gary Keough.*

## County Committee Voting Begins

Ballots for this year's county committee election were mailed to eligible voters on Nov. 5, 2012. Voters must complete and return their ballots to the Farm Service Agency County Office by the close of business on Dec. 3, 2012. If mailed, ballots must be postmarked by midnight Dec. 3, 2012.

Eligible voters in Local Administrative Area (LAA) 1, in each county, who have not received a ballot, please contact your FSA County Office.

#### Who is eligible to vote?

Persons, including those who are designated to represent an entity who are:

- \* of legal age, with an interest in a farm or ranch (including spouses when property is jointly owned);
- \* not of legal age, but supervises and conducts the farming operations on an entire farm;
- \* a participant or person who cooperates in any FSA program, including those who have provided information about their farming operation to FSA.

The candidate receiving the most votes in this direct election will be elected to serve on the COC for a three year term, beginning January 1, 2013.

## Farmers and Ranches Urged to Record Losses from Hurricane Sandy

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Executive Director Don Todd III, urged producers affected by Hurricane Sandy (as well as other Natural Disasters) to keep thorough records of their losses and to report losses to their FSA office, including:

- Number and kind of livestock that have died;
- Dates of death supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts;
- Costs of transporting livestock to safer grounds or new pastures;
- Feed purchases if supplies or grazing pastures are destroyed;
- Crop records, including seed and fertilizer purchases, planting and production records;
- Pictures of on-farm storage facilities that were destroyed by wind or flood waters;
- Evidence of damaged farm land.

The Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) may be able to assist producers who need to repair farmland or remove debris. FSA currently has \$15.5 million available for producers in counties that received a Major Disaster declaration due to Hurricane Sandy, pursuant to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.

Producers with private forest land damaged by Natural Disasters should also contact their local FSA office for information on the Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) which provides assistance to landowners of private forest land to help carry out emergency measures to restore land damaged by a natural disaster.

USDA's Risk Management Agency reminds producers with crop losses to contact their crop insurance agent.

Producers who need emergency credit may receive assistance through the Emergency Loan Program for assistance to recover from production and physical losses due to natural disasters. Producers are eligible for these loans as soon as their county is declared a Presidential or Secretarial disaster county.

To deliver assistance to those who need it most, USDA Secretary Vilsack effectively reduced the interest rate for Emergency Loans in July 2012, while streamlining the Secretarial disaster designations process, resulting in a 40% reduction in processing time for most counties affected by disasters. USDA continues to work with state and local officials, as well as our federal partners, to make sure people have the necessary resources to recover from this challenge.

More information about federal crop insurance may be found at [www.rma.usda.gov](http://www.rma.usda.gov). Additional resources to help farmers and ranchers deal with flooding and other damage may be found at [www.usda.gov/disaster](http://www.usda.gov/disaster) and <http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentidonly=true&contentid=HurricaneInfo.xml>

To find the USDA Service Center nearest you, please visit <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>

## Loans for Socially Disadvantaged

FSA has a number of loan programs available to assist applicants to begin or continue in agricultural production. Loans are available for operating type loans and/or to 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 members of socially disadvantaged groups.

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 the group without regard to his or her individual qualities.

For purposes of this program, socially disadvantaged groups are women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders.

If producers or their spouses believe they would qualify as socially disadvantaged, they should contact their local FSA office for details. FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere.

## FSA Signature Policy

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.

For more clarification on spousal signature authority, contact your local FSA office.

## Rural Youth Loans

The Farm Service Agency makes loans to rural youths to establish and operate income-producing projects in connection with 4-H clubs, Future Farmers of America and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization's advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is \$5,000.

## Maine Harvest Festival: A Complete Success

By Don Todd, III, State Executive Director

I first met Judi and Bill Perkins when I moved to Ohio St in Bangor during the spring of 2000. Judi and Bill were those neighbors that everyone wishes they could have. They were always pleasant, friendly, and there if you needed assistance. They were always generous with gifts during the holidays, which enlightened me early on to the caliber of people they are. I soon learnt of their passion for Maine Agriculture and we shared our common bond to Maine Ag in discussions.



*Judi Perkins, Founder and Chair of the Maine Harvest Festival.*

At some point prior to moving to Etna with my wife and family,



*FSA employees with producer Bob Bowen at the Maine Harvest Festival booth. Left to Right: Jennifer Geel, Bob Bowen, Valerie Porter, Jennifer Ranke, Ruby Carter.*

Judi and I were discussing the diversity of Maine products that are available to the people of Maine and how many of our neighbors were not exposed or aware of this wonderful selection that is available to us who live here. The next thing I knew Judi was planning the first Maine Harvest Festival which occurred in November of 2011.

Judi gained the support of the City of Bangor and the Civic Center who helped get the

event off to a great start by making the event affordable for vendors who would ultimately make this event the success it has become. Watching her make connections, gain marketing media assistance and at the same time convincing all who attended as vendors of the great potential this afforded them--in spite of the costs of insurance to attend--was nothing short of miraculous.

From her experience with the spring garden show she knew all the little touches that make this type of event successful, such as: the picture gallery upstairs in the Civic Center of all the old farm scenes in Maine; the wine and beer tasting area; food demonstration area; and the live band in the convention area entrance. The first Harvest Festival was more successful than many people believed it would be, and Judi was already planning the second year as the first ended. The second year results were even more impressive.



Bill was always there in full support, from hauling in old farm equipment to helping set up for the event and, oh yeah, that little thing called money. They would never say anything but I know they have contributed their own resources to make this event what it has become in two short years. What makes this even more special is that they truly did it out of their love for Maine Agriculture and the desire to contribute to the agricultural community in which they live.



If you were one of the lucky people who attended this year's Maine Harvest Festival, you already know how fantastic it was. I have already marked my calendar for the third Maine Harvest Festival coming up on the second weekend of November 2013. It promises to be even more spectacular by being in the new Civic

Center with all of the vendors and demonstration programs occurring in a wonderful new facility. I will be there and hope to see you there supporting the diversity provided by our Maine farmers.

I publically want to thank Judi and Bill Perkins for their great efforts and support to Maine Agriculture. For those of us who do our best to serve the agricultural community every day we can't thank you enough.

## FSA's Penobscot County in Maine was selected as the "bluest" office.

We are in the boxing ring to knock-out prostate cancer! Prostate cancer is a man's issue and a woman's concern. Everyone knows someone who has been affected by cancer in some way. In our office, a fellow employee's brother-in-law was diagnosed with prostate cancer 5 years ago and we wear our ribbons in his honor. We are happy to report he has been in remission for the past 5 years and living a full and happy life.



*Employees from left to right are: Sheila Bartlett, Mary Sanstrom and Amy Polyot.*



## Hispanic and Women Farmer and Rancher Claims Period

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers who allege discrimination by the USDA in past decades can file claims between September 24, 2012 and March 25, 2013.

The process offers a voluntary alternative to litigation for each Hispanic or female farmer and rancher who can prove that USDA denied their applications for loan or loan servicing assistance for discriminatory reasons for certain time periods between 1981 and 2000.

As announced in February 2011, the voluntary claims process will make available at least \$1.33 billion for cash awards and tax relief payments, plus up to \$160 million in farm debt relief, to eligible Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers. There are no filing fees to participate in the program.

The Department will continue reaching out to potential Hispanic and female claimants around the country to get the word out to individuals who may be eligible for this program so they have the opportunity to participate.

Call center representatives can be reached at 1-888-508-4429. Claimants must register for a claims package (by calling the number or visiting the website) and the claims package will be mailed to claimants. All those interested in learning more or receiving information about the claims process and claims packages are encouraged to attend meetings in your communities about the claims process and contact the website or claims telephone number.

Website: [www.farmerclaims.gov](http://www.farmerclaims.gov)

Phone: 1-888-508-4429

Claims Period: September 24, 2012 - March 25, 2013.

Independent legal services companies will administer the claims process and adjudicate the claims. Although there are no filing fees to participate and a lawyer is not required to participate in the claims process, persons seeking legal advice may contact a lawyer or other legal services provider.

## Harvest Time in Aroostook County

By Doreen Conlogue, CED

You can smell it in the air.....potato harvest in the County has a rich, distinct aroma. If you live here or have visited the area during this time of year you know exactly what I'm talking about.

Workers are up early tuning into "Potato Pickers Special" On WAGMTV to find out what their start time is. It's not unusual to see harvesters crawling down through the fields at 6:00 a.m. The harvester crew quickly learns to dress in layers as the frosty mornings often turn into t-shirt weather by the early afternoon. Nowadays, most aspects of potato harvest are mechanized so it's rare to see barrels lined up in the fields with pickers hunched over filling their baskets. Sadly, those days are gone but chances are, if you're a native of Aroostook County and over the age of 35, you've picked potatoes at some point in your life.



After a very wet June, followed by an exceptionally dry summer; harvest has finally arrived. There are approximately 50,000 acres of spuds grown in the County these days and with the help of local school kids, farmers will harvest the entire crop over a three to four week period. Growers began digging their crop on September 17th when many schools commenced their 3 week harvest break and thanks to the fabulous weather Mother Nature has provided thus far, everything is right on track. Most growers should finish up by the middle of October and the quality of the crop is excellent.

Farm Service Agency has three offices located in Aroostook County: 304 North Street in Houlton, 735 Main Street in Presque Isle and 139 Market Street in Fort Kent or 207-764-4151.



**USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Stop 9410, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call toll-free at (866) 632-9992 (English) or (800) 877-8339 (TDD) or (866) 377-8642 (English Federal-relay) or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish Federal-relay).**

## Washington County: A Look at the Cranberry Harvest

By: Amanda May, CED

Like the original feast held in the Autumn of 1621 by the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag at Plymouth Rock, Thanksgiving is a time to celebrate a successful harvest. A time centered on cooking and sharing a bountiful meal with family and friends. In a year where much of our Country has been hit hard by drought, I feel very thankful that pretty much everything on my Thanksgiving table can be found grown locally here in Maine...from the turkey, to the potatoes, to the pumpkins in the pie. And what Thanksgiving dinner is complete without the Cranberry sauce?

Washington County may be known as the blueberry capital of the world...but it is also the largest cranberry producing county in the state...with producers harvesting approximately 187 acres each fall.



You have probably seen the commercials with the hip-wader wearing farmer standing amidst acres of ruby red berries floating picture perfect on a flooded bog. This picture might lead you to believe that cranberries grow in or on top of the water...not so. Cranberries actually grow on low-lying vines in beds layered with sand, peat, gravel and clay. During the growing season cranberry beds are not flooded, but are irrigated regularly to maintain soil moisture. Flooding cranberry beds does occur, in fact it is an important management tool...beds can be flooded during temperature extremes to protect against frost or heat damage and they can also be flooded to facilitate harvest.



There are two distinct methods to harvest cranberries...each with differing end results...

Dry harvesting is the only way to get cranberries that can be sold fresh. To dry-harvest, growers typically use wooden rakes or lawn mower-shaped mechanical pickers with comb-shaped conveyor belts that rake the berries off their vines and deposit them into attached burlap bags. This method is very labor intensive but is also the most lucrative. These berries can be found at farmers markets, in the produce section of your grocery store, or purchased directly off the farm. Many local producers have websites where you can place your order and have fresh cranberries shipped directly to your door. Only about 10% of Maine's cranberry crop is dry harvested.

The rest are wet harvested. A recent visit to Sugar Hill Cranberry Company in Columbia Falls (where a wetter than normal fall made dry harvest nearly impossible) gave me a firsthand look at this process.

Owners John and Christine Alexander had one of the bogs flooded before we got there. Having donned their hip-waders, helpers used a water-reel harvesting machine to break the cranberries from the vines causing the cranberries, which have small air pockets in the center, to float to the top of the water. Next, long floating tubes, known within the industry as "racks" or "booms," were used to corral the berries; making them easier to pump into waiting trucks. From there they were hauled to receiving stations and eventually to processing plants where they will be used to make processed foods such as juice, jelly, and the "must have" cranberry sauce that compliments your turkey dinner so well.

The Washington County Farm Service Agency is located at 8 M & M Place in Machias, ME, 207-255-3612, ext. 2.



## 2013 Crop Deadlines

Crop Type	NAP Application Deadline (to purchase coverage)	Acreage Reporting Deadline
2013 Fall Seeded Small Grains, Perennial Forage crops including alfalfa/perennial grasses	September 30, 2012	December 15, 2012
Honey	December 1, 2012	January 2, 2013
Maple Sap	January 2, 2013	January 31, 2013
Fruit Trees/Perennial Crops Apples, Blueberries, Cranberries, Raspberries, Strawberries	November 20, 2012	January 15, 2013
Spring Seeded Crops Corn, Cucumbers, Carrots, Peas, Potatoes, Pumpkins, etc.	March 15, 2013	July 15, 2013
2013 Spring Forage Seeding	March 15, 2013	August 15, 2013
2014 Value Loss Crops Ornamental Nursery	May 1, 2013	May 31, 2013
2014 Value Loss Crops Aquaculture (Oysters), Turf Grass, Christmas Trees	September 1, 2013	September 30, 2013

### Trade Adjustment Assistance Program Reminder: September 2013 – Dead- line to complete

In September 2010, Foreign Agriculture Service certified group petitions filed by blueberry producers in Maine and lobster producers in the Northeast. Training for this program is ongoing through September 2013. Participants are encouraged not to wait until the last minute. Ideally you should plan to have your workshop time and initial business plan done early in the year; this will give you enough time to complete the in-depth business plan by the September deadline.

Currently, there are no in-person workshops scheduled for the TAA program, although more may be coming in the future. Training and program information can be accessed online at <http://www.taaforfarmers.org>.

For more information on the Trade Adjustment Assistance for Farmers Program feel free to contact your local FSA County office.



### Farm Storage Facility Loan Program

The Farm Storage Facility Loan Program (FSFLP) allows producers of eligible commodities to obtain low-interest financing to build or upgrade farm storage and handling facilities.

The new maximum principal amount of a loan through FSFL is \$500,000. Participants are now required to provide a down payment of 15 percent, with CCC providing a loan for the remaining 85 percent of the net cost of the eligible storage facility and permanent drying and handling equipment. New loan terms of 7, 10 or 12 years are available depending on the amount of the loan. Interest rates for each term rate may be different and are based on the rate which CCC borrows from the Treasury Department.

Payments are available in the form of a partial disbursement and the remaining final disbursement. The partial disbursement will be available after a portion of the construction has been completed. The final fund disbursement will be made when all construction is completed. The maximum amount of the partial disbursement will be 50 percent of the projected and approved total loan amount.

Applications for FSFL must be submitted to the FSA county office that maintains the farm's records. An FSFL must be approved before any site preparation or construction can begin.

## Increased Guaranteed Loan Limit

The Farm Service Agency has announced that the loan limit for the Guaranteed Loan Program will increase to \$1,302,000 on October 1, 2012. The limit is adjusted annually based on data compiled by the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

The lending limit increases every year according to an inflation index. The maximum combined guaranteed and direct farm loan indebtedness will also be increased to \$1,602,000.

As a reminder, 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.

Producers should contact their local FSA County Offices with questions about farm loans.

### Selected Interest Rates for November 2012

Farm Operating - Direct	1.125
Farm Ownership - Direct	3.125
Farm Ownership - Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.50
Emergency	2.125
Farm Storage Facility—7 Year	1.125
Farm Storage Facility—10 Year	1.750
Farm Storage Facility—12 Year	2.000
9 Month Commodity Loan	1.125

### Summary of FLP Activity for FY 12

115	Direct Operating Loans	\$ 5,993,030
0	Direct Operating Loans Pending	\$ 0
12	Guaranteed Operating Loans	\$ 954,266
9	Direct Farm Ownership	\$ 1,633,600
5	Direct Farm Ownership Pending	\$ 1,010,000
10	Guaranteed Farm Ownership	\$ 4,665,142
2	Guaranteed Farm Ownership Pending	\$ 448,000

**For a listing of real estate foreclosure sales nationwide please click on the following link:**

<http://www.resales.usda.gov>

### Borrower Training Vendors

The following vendors have current Agreements to conduct borrower training in Maine:

Rural Services of Indiana, Inc. 60918 NE 5th Street South Bend, IN 46614	Roslyn Amor	Financial Management/ Business Planning
Farmer Courses, LLC 603 NE 5th Street Madison, SD 57042	Greg Hanson	Financial Management/ Business Planning and Crop Production
Mi' Casa Enterprises PO Box 1393 Seagraves, TX 79359	Karen Harlan	Financial Management/ Business Planning