



Berrien County News

Berrien County USDA Service Center

Berrien County FSA
3334 Edgewood Rd
Berrien Springs, MI
49103-9553
269-471-9111 (phone)
269-471-3773 (fax)
www.fsa.usda.gov/mi

Hours

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

County Committee

Calvin Gnodtke, Chair
Mary Wagner, Vice-Chair
Neal Kreitner

COC Meetings

Second Wednesday of
each month at 9:00 a.m.

Farm Program Staff

Jenifer A. Taylor, CED
Sue Kraklau, PT
Barb Dumke, PT
Nova Little, PT
Marquita Sommer, PT
Steve Kraklau, Field Tech

Farm Loan Staff

Jon LaPorte, FLO
Delores Whitson, PT

Be A Part Of The Democratic Process

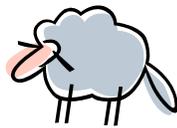
Farmland owners, operators and tenants of legal voting age are eligible to run for office and vote in County Committee elections.

The Local Administrative Area that is up for election this year is LAA Area #2 which includes *Baroda, Berrien, Lake, Lincoln, Niles, Oronoko, Royalton and St. Joseph Townships.*

County Committees are a critical part of federal program delivery in the County Offices. They help run the FSA programs and make them fit the needs of local farmers.

Ballots were mailed to eligible voters in early November. Ballots must be returned by December 7, 2009.

If you think you are eligible but have never received a ballot, please contact us so we can get you on the voter list.



Wool & Mohair Deadline

The final date to request a loan or LDP on wool or mohair harvested in 2009 is **January 31, 2010.** The market price has been below the loan rate (42 cents/lb for un-graded wool), so there has been a loan deficiency payment in effect.

New Faces in the Office

Jon LaPorte is the new Farm Loan Officer. Jon is originally from Cass County and operates a small cash crop farm that grows corn, soybeans, and wheat. He is a 2007 graduate of Michigan State University with a 4-year degree in Agribusiness Management and a specialization in Agronomy.

Jenifer Taylor has recently started as County Executive Director. Jenifer is originally from the Eaton County area and has a livestock and cash crop background.

Don't be afraid to introduce yourself the next time you're in the office.

2009 Crop Commodity Loans

Marketing assistance loans provide producers interim financing at harvest time to meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows. Loans mature on the last day of the ninth calendar month following the month in which the loan is approved. The current interest rate is 1.375% and the loan rates are as follows:

| | |
|--------|------------------|
| \$1.95 | Soft Red Wheat |
| \$2.08 | Soft White Wheat |
| \$1.32 | Oats |
| \$1.95 | Corn |
| \$5.02 | Soybeans |
| \$7.90 | Sunflower Seed |
| \$8.41 | Canola |

Biomass Crop Assistance Program

The Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) was established to offer financial assistance for producers or entities with the collection, storage, harvest and transportation (CHST) of eligible material for use in biomass conversion facilities. To receive payment, producers and entities must deliver the material to a qualified Biomass Conversion Facility (BCF) and the biomass material must be listed as an eligible material. For more information on the BCAP program, please contact your local FSA County Office.



2010-2012 Leases

Starting with the 2010 crop year, all leases must include, at a minimum, the following information:

- Length of lease: multi-year lease must list number of years
- Owner(s) and operators printed names **and** signatures
- Signature dates
- Type of lease: cash, share, barter, etc.

2010 DCP/ACRE Sign-Up

Enrollment for the 2010 Direct and Counter-cyclical Program (DCP) has begun and will continue through **June 1, 2010**. Don't wait for the very last minute. Call for an appointment today!

Power of Attorney

Did you know you can retain an agent to act on your behalf for programs and transactions authorized under the 2008 Farm Bill and most other FSA administered programs? This can be done by completing an FSA- 211: Power of Attorney. The form is available at your local USDA Service Center or on-line at <http://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov>. Forms completed outside FSA offices must be notarized. To find out more, call the office.

Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program

SURE provides benefits for farm revenue losses due to natural disaster. Unlike the prior USDA Crop Disaster Programs, SURE is legislated through 2011. For SURE program purposes, a "farm" refers to all acreage in all counties that is planted or intended to be planted to crops that are for sale by the producer, and all hay crops.

SURE payments are available to producers on farms that are located in a county covered by a qualifying natural disaster declaration (USDA Secretarial Declarations only) or in a contiguous county or the actual production is less than 50% of the normal production. In order to receive payments, the farm must suffer at least a 10% eligible production loss on at least one crop of economic significance.

For a producer to be eligible for the SURE Program, **all** of the farming operation's crops (planted or intended) that are of economic significance must be covered by either Federal Crop Insurance (CI) or FSA's Noninsurable Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage. Coverage must also be obtained for other crops for which CI or NAP is available, such as nursery, honey, aquaculture, and floriculture. However, coverage for grazed crops is not required for SURE.

Eligible farmers and ranchers who meet the definition of Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, or Beginning Farmer or Rancher do not have to meet the RMPR requirement.

Producers with qualifying losses are eligible to receive 60% of the difference between the SURE Disaster Program Guarantee and the actual Farm Revenue. The guarantee is determined by totaling the calculated guarantee for each crop. For insured crops, the guarantee is based on the level of coverage the producer has elected. Higher levels of coverage will result in higher crop guarantees. For NAP crops, the guarantee is based on a formula that includes the yield, acreage, and price factors. The farm's Disaster Program guarantee cannot exceed 90% of the expected revenue for the farm.

Included in the Total Farm Revenue calculation are estimated crop value, CI indemnities, NAP payments, Market Assistance Loan proceeds, other disaster payments, DCP payments (15% of direct payments, plus all CC payments and ACRE payments).

To assist farmers and ranchers in evaluating their options with SURE, USDA has created a SURE Calculator. To utilize the Calculator, visit the FSA website (www.fsa.usda.gov). Under "I Want to..." in the upper right corner, click on "View Farm Bill Information."

No signup date has been announced yet. Please contact your local FSA County Office for more information.

The 2008 Farm Bill authorized several new disaster programs in addition to SURE. Contact your local FSA County Office for more information.

- Livestock Incentive Program (LIP). Signup began July 13, 2009.
- Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP). Signup began September 9, 2009.
- Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP). Signup began September 9, 2009.
- Tree Assistance Program (TAP). Signup is scheduled to begin November 2, 2009.

Foreign Buyers Notification

The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) requires all foreign owners of U.S. agricultural land to report their holdings to the Secretary of Agriculture. The Farm Service Agency administers this program for USDA. Foreign persons who have purchased or sold agricultural land in the county are required to report the transaction to FSA within 90 days of the closing. Failure to submit the AFIDA form could result in civil penalties of up to 25% of the fair market value of the property. County government offices, realtors, attorneys and others involved in real estate transactions are reminded to notify foreign investors of these reporting requirements.

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.



Spousal Signature

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. Spouses may not sign power of attorney forms on behalf of each other or sign on behalf of the other as an authorized signatory for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations or other similar entities. Spouses must have a power of attorney on file or sign personally for claim settlements, such as promissory notes, and on security documents for price support loans.

Major Changes to the Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) Program!

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 made the following major changes to the FSFL Program, effective August 17, 2009:

- adds eligible FSFL commodities including fruit and vegetable cold storage facilities, hay and renewable biomass
- adds FSFL terms of 10 and 12 years
- authorizes one partial disbursement
- increases the maximum FSFL amount to \$500,000 per FSFL
- allows borrowers to increase the required down payment from 15 percent to 20 percent to negate the requirement for a severance agreement
- increases the non-refundable FSFL application fee to \$100 per eligible borrower.

Fruits and vegetables (FAVs) have been added as eligible FSFL commodities and cold storage facilities as eligible structures. FAVs eligible for cold storage facilities include, but are not limited to: apples, blueberries, asparagus, cabbage, grapes, potatoes, watermelons, pumpkins and squash. Controlled atmosphere storage structures are **not** eligible for FSFL. Hay is defined as a grass or legume that has been cut and stored, and includes commonly used grass mixtures and forage legumes. Grain legumes for hay are also included, and are defined as hay where the entire plant, including the seeds, is harvested at maturity and used for animal feed.

Renewable biomass is defined as any organic matter that is available on a renewable or recurring basis used for the production of energy in the form of heat, electricity, and liquid, solid or gaseous fuels. Renewable biomass includes crop residue (corn stover, orchard prunings, etc.), plants and trees excluding old growth timber, renewable plant materials (feed grains or other agricultural commodities), and vegetative waste material (wood waste and residues, food waste, yard waste). **Manure from any source is not included.**

Total principal amount term options for FSFLs are as follows:

- \$100,000 or less the term is 7 years only
- \$100,000.01 to \$250,000, the borrower can specify 7 or 10 years
- \$250,000.01 to \$500,000, the borrower can specify 7, 10, or 12 years.

To be eligible for FSFL, the borrower must:

- be a producer of a facility loan commodity
- demonstrate a need for increased storage capacity
- show the ability to repay FSFL through the financial analysis process
- meet all other eligibility requirements.

FSFLs are approved and disbursed to a farming operation that is an eligible entity or an eligible producer at the time of approval. FSFL regulations allow that if any changes are made to a farming operation with an outstanding FSFL, the borrower must either find an eligible borrower or entity to assume FSFL, repay FSFL, or undergo new financial analysis to ensure that CCC's interests are protected and that the current borrower is in a position to continue making the scheduled FSFL payments.

FSFL collateral must be used for the purpose for which the storage facility was erected, constructed, assembled, or installed for the entire FSFL term. The intent of the FSFL Program is to provide on-farm storage to producers for storing eligible facility loan commodities they produce and not for any other purpose. The FSFL Program does not have the resources to provide financing for commercial storage facilities. Contact your local FSA County Office for more information or to schedule an appointment to start a Farm Storage Facility Loan application.

Special Accommodations

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in any meeting or event should contact Jenifer Taylor by phone at (269) 471-9111 ext. 2 or by e-mail at jenifer.taylor@mi.usda.gov.

Farming Operation Changes

If you have bought or sold land, or if you have picked up or dropped rented land from your operation, make sure you report the changes to the office as soon as possible. You need to provide a copy of your deed or recorded land contract for purchased property. Failure to maintain accurate records with FSA on all land you have an interest in can lead to possible program ineligibility and penalties. Making the record changes now will save you time in the spring.



Continuous CRP & SAFE

At this time USDA has no general signups scheduled for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). However, environmentally sensitive acreage qualifying for the Conservation Reserve Program State Acres For wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Practice and Continuous CRP will still be eligible for enrollment. These targeted programs remain funded, and continue to provide heightened environmental and financial benefits to select areas.

To be eligible for enrollment in the Continuous CRP, participants and acreage must meet certain requirements. Provided the eligibility requirements are met, FSA will automatically accept enrollments of acreage into Continuous CRP. Landowners may enroll in the program at any time during the year.

For more information on Continuous CRP enrollments, please contact your local FSA office.

| Dates to Remember | |
|----------------------|--|
| Dec 1 st | Last day to purchase NAP on honey and maple sap |
| Dec 7 th | COC Election Ballots Due |
| Dec 25 th | Office Closed: Christmas |
| Jan 1 st | Office Closed: New Year's |
| Jan 18 th | Office Closed: MLK Day |
| Jan 31 st | Final Date to Request 2009 Crop Wool & Mohair Loans or LDP's |
| Feb 1 st | Last day to purchase NAP on onions |
| Mar 15 th | Last day to purchase Crop Insurance or NAP on spring seeded annual crops |
| Continues | Farm Storage Facility Loans |
| Continues | Continuous Conservation Reserve Program |

Visit our Web site at:
www.fsa.usda.gov/mi

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