

March 2013



NEWSLETTER



Berrien County FSA Updates

Berrien County FSA Office

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DCP/ACRE Sign-up Continues

DCP and ACRE signups for the 2013 crops are on-going. The DCP sign-up period will end on Aug. 2, 2013; and the ACRE sign-up period will end on June 3, 2013.

The 2013 DCP and ACRE program provisions are unchanged from 2012, except that all eligible participants in 2013 may choose to enroll in either DCP or ACRE for the 2013 crop year. This means that eligible producers who were enrolled in ACRE in 2012 may elect to enroll in DCP in 2013 or may re-enroll in ACRE in 2013. Likewise producers who were enrolled in DCP may opt for ACRE enrollment.

[Read more about DCP and ACRE](#) or contact the FSA county office for more information, or an appointment to enroll.

45th CRP General Sign-Up

USDA will conduct a four-week general sign-up for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), beginning May 20 and ending on June 14. CRP protects the nation's natural resources through voluntary participation, while providing significant economic and environmental benefits to rural communities across the United States.

Currently, about 27 million acres are enrolled in CRP. Producers that are accepted in the sign-up can receive cost-share assistance to plant long-term, resource-conserving covers and receive an annual rental payment for the length of the contract (10-15 years).

Contracts on 3.3 million acres of CRP are set to expire on Sept. 30, 2013. Producers with expiring contracts or

producers with environmentally sensitive land are encouraged to evaluate their options under CRP.

For more information on CRP and other FSA programs, visit a local FSA service center or www.fsa.usda.gov.

Microloan Program

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) developed the Microloan (ML) program to better serve the unique financial operating needs of beginning, niche and small family farm operations.

FSA offers applicants a Microloan designed to help farmers with credit needs of \$35,000 or less. The loan features a streamlined application process built to fit the needs of new and smaller producers. This loan program will also be useful to specialty crop producers and operators of community supported agriculture (CSA).

Eligible applicants can apply for a maximum amount of \$35,000 to pay for initial start-up expenses such as hoop houses to extend the growing season, essential tools, irrigation and annual expenses such as seed, fertilizer, utilities, land rents, marketing, and distribution expenses. As financing needs increase, applicants can apply for a regular operating loan up to the maximum amount of \$300,000 or obtain financing from a commercial lender under FSA's Guaranteed Loan Program.

Individuals interested in applying for a microloan or who would like to discuss other farm loan programs available, should contact the local FSA office to setup an appointment with a loan approval official.

MILC Program Extended

Dairy producers enrolled in the Milk Income Loss Contract program (MILC) will have their contracts automatically extended through Sept. 30, 2013. There is no need to re-enroll in the program. The MILC program was part of several FSA-related programs that were continued with the extension of the 2008 Farm Bill.

The production start month previously selected by an operation is applicable for FY 2013. Starting March 1, 2013, all production start month changes must be made according to normal start month selection provisions.

Normal start month provisions: Changes must be made on or before the 14th day of the month before the selected MILC production start month, except as otherwise provided during the applicable sign-up phase. A dairy operation cannot select a MILC production start month for any month that has already begun, except as otherwise provided; has already ended or; milk was not produced by the dairy operation.

Please call the FSA office and make an appointment if you decide to make changes.

NAP Coverage Deadline

March 15 is the last day for producers to apply for Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage using Form CCC-471, Application for Coverage, and pay the service fee at the FSA county office. The application and service fee must be filed **by March 15**, the deadline date for 2013 spring planted crops.

The service fee is \$250 per crop per county or \$750 per producer per county. The fee cannot exceed a total of \$1875 per producer with farming interest in multiple counties. Limited resource producers may request a waiver of service fees.

To qualify, a producer must be a landowner, tenant or sharecropper who shares in the risk of producing an eligible crop. More information about NAP may be found on the FSA website located at www.fsa.usda.gov

Marketing Assistance Loans

Marketing Assistance Loans, also referred to as Commodity 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 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 certification.

Beginning and Limited Resource Farmers

FSA assists beginning farmers and or members of socially disadvantaged groups to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:

- § Has operated a farm for not more that 10 years
- § Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm
- § Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA
- § Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's median size.

Additional program information, loan applications and other materials are available at your local USDA Service Center. You may visit www.fsa.usda.gov

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 20250-9450, 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).