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Branch County News

**USDA Service Center
Branch County FSA**
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Hours
Monday - Friday
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

County Committee
Neil Carpenter
Kevin Miller
Wayne Barnes
Jill Bucklin, Advisor

Staff
Program Technicians:
Kelly Gruner
Jessica Mobley
Linda Snyder
Carri Duncan-McCollough

Hope Gentile, CED
Russell LaFollette, FLM



Appointments Recommended
We recommend you call to make an appointment before coming to the office to conduct business. This will enable us to prepare any necessary paperwork and research issues before your appointment. We realize how important your time is, and this will reduce the amount of time that you have to wait in the office.



DCP & ACRE Program Sign Up Underway

The Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) is a new program authorized by the 2008 Farm Bill. The ACRE alternative provides eligible producers a state-level revenue guarantee, based on the 5-year state Olympic average yield and the 2-year national average price. ACRE payments are made when both state and farm-level triggers are met. By participating in ACRE, producers elect to forgo counter-cyclical payments along with a 20-percent reduction in direct payments and a 30-percent reduction in loan rates. **DCP & ACRE sign-up runs April 27 – August 14, 2009.** During the sign up producers can choose to stay with DCP or participate in ACRE. A decision to elect ACRE binds the farm to the program through the 2012 crop year.

For more details contact Kelly.



New Commodity Loan & LDP Repayment Rates

FSA is now using an improved and more stable system for determining marketing assistance loan & LDP repayment rates for wheat, feed grains, pulse crops, oilseeds, wool, mohair & honey. Repayment rates are the lesser of:

- 1) loan rate plus interest
- 2) 30-day average terminal market price
- 3) 5-day average terminal market price

Call Carri for details.

Crop Reporting

The annual, timely and accurate reporting of acres for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage, can prevent loss of benefits for a variety of Farm Service Agency programs. All cropland on the farm must be reported to receive benefits from the Direct and Counter-cyclical Program, Acreage Crop Revenue Election (ACRE), marketing assistance loans and Loan Deficiency Payments. Conservation Reserve Program acreage must be reported to receive annual rental payments. And, crop acreage for Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) must also be reported.

Crop reports, form FSA-578, Report of Acreage, must account for all cropland on a farm, whether idle or planted. Producers need to file their acreage reports by June 30, 2009 for fall seeded small grain crops and July 15th for all crops except fall seeded small grains.



Prevented Planting:

Prevented planting needs be reported no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date.

Failed Acreage:

Reports of failed acreage must be filed within 15 days before disposition of the crop, and producers must be able to establish to the satisfaction of the county committee that the crop failed and was prevented from being replanted through the normal planting period because of natural disaster conditions.

Make your appointment today!



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.

Maintenance of Idle Acres Enrolled in the DCP Program

Participants are required to protect all idle contract acres from erosion and weeds. Idle fields designated as "contract acres" must have a sod cover, crop residue or volunteer grasses. Weeds are not an acceptable cover and must be mowed. Failure to control weeds on contract acres will cost you program benefits if the County Committee determines the producer failed to demonstrate a good faith effort to control weeds and/or erosion.

Youth Loans

The Farm Service Agency makes loans to rural youths to establish and operate income-producing projects in connection with 4-H clubs, FFA and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is \$5000.

Youth Loan Eligibility Requirements:

- Be a citizen of the United States (which includes Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) or a legal resident alien
- Be 10 years to 21 years of age
- Live in a rural area or in a town of 50,000 people or fewer
- Must obtain a written recommendation and consent from a parent or guardian if the applicant has not reached the age of majority under state law
- Comply with FSA's general eligibility requirements
- Be unable to get a loan from other sources
- Conduct a modest income-producing project in a supervised program of work as outlined above
- Demonstrate capability of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. The project supervisor must recommend the project and the loan, along with providing adequate supervision.

Contact Russ Lafollette, Farm Loan Manager in the Jonesville Service Center. (517) 849-9890 ext. 2



PAYMENT ELIGIBILITY AND PAYMENT LIMITATION PROVISIONS FOR 2009

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 made changes to payment eligibility and payment limitation provisions to be implemented for the 2009 and subsequent program years.

Actively engaged in farming still requires the following:

- significant contribution of capital, land, equipment, or combination thereof
- significant contribution of active person labor, active personal management, or combination thereof
- contributions must be commensurate with the claimed share of the profit or loss of the farming operation
- contributions must be at risk for a loss. The landowner exemption still applies. A person or legal entity who is a landowner may be considered "actively engaged in farming" under the landowner exemption.

Each of the partners, stockholders, or members must make a contribution of active personal labor and/or active personal management to the farming operation that must be performed on a regular basis, identifiable and documentable, and separate and distinct from the contributions of any other partner, stockholder, or member of the farming operation.

The contribution of the partners, stockholders and members must be significant and commensurate. The legal entity will make contributions to the farming operation that are at risk for a loss, with the level of risk being commensurate with the claimed share of the farming operation. The failure of any partner, stockholder, or member to meet this requirement will result in a reduction of payments to the payment entity commensurate with the ownership share held by that interest holder.

Any change to a farming operation that results in the increase in the number of persons or legal entities for payment limitation purposes must be bona fide and substantive.

Contact Linda for further information.

Cash Rent Tenant

A producer that rents land from another producer for cash, or a guaranteed crop share, as the amount of the commodity to be paid in rent.

Note: The provisions apply to tenants who rent land for 0 dollars or farm the land in exchange for compensation other than cash, such as:

-Controlling weeds on land not owned
-Barter arrangements

Any cash-rent tenant shall be ineligible to receive payments unless the cash-rent tenant makes either of the following:

-A significant contribution of active personal labor
-A significant contribution of both active personal management and equipment.

ANNUAL NOTICE TO PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Payments and benefits under certain programs are subject to some or all of the following:

- Payment limitation by direct attribution
- Payment limitation amounts for the applicable programs
- Actively engaged in farming requirements
- Cash-rent tenant rule
- Foreign person rule
- Average AGI limitations

No program benefits subject to limitation will be provided until:

- All required forms for the specific situation are provided
- Necessary payment eligibility and payment limitation determinations are made
- If any changes occur that could affect any of the determinations, producers must timely notify the county office by filing revised forms, as applicable

Note: failure to do so may adversely affect payment eligibility

- All applicable forms submitted by producers are subject to spot check through the end-of-year review process.
- A determination of not actively engaged in farming results in ineligibility for any payment or benefit requiring a determination of actively engaged in farming
- Noncompliance with AGI provision, either by exceeding the applicable limitations or by failure to submit a certification statement, will result in the determination of ineligibility for all program benefits subject to AGI provisions.

Unauthorized Disposition

Loan grain is not to be disposed of through feeding, selling, or any other form of disposal without prior written authorization. The financial penalties for this are severe. Always call the office before any loan grain is fed or sold.



FSA's New Buzz Word - Personally Identifiable Information (PII)

The Agency has taken a strong stand on protecting individual's personal information. Due to this change, some of the information you have been able to get out of the office, will no longer be available to you.

Examples of these records are:

- 1) section maps containing acreage, wetland, HEL information that is not part of your operation and
- 2) base and yield information from farms that you do not own or rent.

You will also start to notice that even information pertaining to other individuals will be removed from your copy of program applications or documents.

Farm Reconstitutions

At FSA, farms are "constituted" to group all tracts having the same owner and the same operator under one farm serial number. When changes in ownership or operation take place, a farm reconstitution is necessary. If an owner or operator can not agree about program participation, like in the case of the new ACRE program, then producers should inquire about a **possible** reconstitution of the farm at the local FSA office.

The reconstitution—or recon—is the process of combining or dividing farms or tracts of land based on the farming operation. Remember, to be effective for the current year, recons must be requested by **August 1** for farms enrolled in specific programs.

Call Jessica for all your Recon requests.

Soybean Request for Referendum

beginning May 4, 2009 and continuing through May 29, 2009. To be eligible to participate, producers must certify and provide documentation that shows that they produced soybeans and paid an assessment on the soybeans during the period of Jan. 1, 2007, through Dec. 31, 2008.

Contact Linda for additional information.

FSA Policy on Assisting Producers with Forms & Applications

When a producer signs and dates any form or application, they are acknowledging that all information contained therein is true and correct, regardless of how that information was placed upon the form or application. This applies to any crop acreage report, application for coverage, request for price support benefit, certification of production, or AGI or any other such document that the producer cannot complete and submit independently of FSA employee assistance.

Dates to Remember	
May 25 th	Office Closed for Memorial Day
May 31 st	Final date to request a 2008 commodity loan on corn and soybeans
June 30 th	Last day to report Fall seeded small grain crops
July 3 rd	Office Closed for Independence Day
July 15 th	Last day to report all other crops.
August 14 th	Last day to sign up DCP & ACRE
Continues	Farm Storage Facility Loans
Continues	Continuous Conservation Reserve Program
Continues	SAFE program enrollment

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