

December 2013



- NEW COUNTY COMMITTEE ELECTION BALLOTS TO BE MAILED
- Branch County Committee Advisor
- Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL)
- FSA Signature Policy
- Beginning Farmer Loans
- 2014 Acreage Reporting Dates

Branch County FSA Updates

Branch County FSA Office

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County Executive Director:
Hope Gentile

Program Technicians:
Shelly Dickinson

Kelly Gruner

Jessica Mobley

Linda Snyder

Farm Loan Manager:
Russ Lafollete

Loan Officer:

Crystal Hepker

Program Technicians:

Debra Wheeler

NEW COUNTY COMMITTEE ELECTION BALLOTS TO BE MAILED

The County Committee Election ballots that were mailed to producers on Nov. 4 were incorrectly printed with the producer's name and address on the back of the ballot. County committee elections must use a secret ballot so the misprinted ballots cannot be used. Please destroy or recycle the misprinted ballot. If you have already voted, your ballot will be destroyed unopened.

New ballots will be mailed to producers on December 20, 2013. These ballots will indicate that they are the corrected ballot in several places, including on the outside of the mailing, on the ballot and on the outside of the return envelope.

The corrected ballot must be returned to the Branch County FSA Office or postmarked by January 17, 2014. All newly elected county committee members will take office February 18, 2014. All county committee members whose term expires on Dec. 31, 2013, will have their term extended to January 31, 2014.

Branch County Committee Advisor

We are currently accepting nominations for County Committee Advisors for Branch County. Advisors serve as a voice for socially disadvantaged farmers to ensure fair representation. Socially disadvantaged members include women, African Americans, American Indians, Hispanics, Asian and Pacific Islanders and Alaskan Natives. Persons interested in serving as an Advisor to the County Committee should be a member of a socially disadvantaged group.

Joann VanDeusen

The duties of the COC advisor include:

Phone: 517-849-9890

Next County Committee

Meeting: 01/22/2014 8:30 a.m.

This date and time is subject to change.

- Attending a quarterly meeting;
- Participating in all deliberations;
- Increasing awareness of and participation in Farm Service Agency activities;
- Helping to develop interest and incentives in underrepresented group members for considering FSA work as a career;
- Actively soliciting candidates from underrepresented groups for nomination during the election process.

Candidates for COC Advisor shall reside in Branch County, be actively participating in farming in the COC jurisdiction, be willing and able to serve as an advisor, and indicate in writing their willingness and ability to serve.

Please submit your nomination to the Branch County FSA Office by January 15, 2014.

Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL)

Short-term financing is available by obtaining low interest commodity loans for eligible harvested production. A nine-month Marketing Assistance Loan provides financing that allows producers to store production for later marketing. The crop may be stored on the farm or in the warehouse.

Loans are available for producers who share in the risk of producing the eligible commodity and maintain beneficial interest in the crop through the duration of the loan. Beneficial interest means retaining the ability to make decisions about the commodity, responsibility for loss because of damage to the commodity and title to the commodity. Once beneficial interest in a commodity is lost, it is ineligible for a loan, even if you regain beneficial interest.

FSA Signature Policy

Using the correct signature when doing business with FSA can save time and prevent a delay in program benefits. The following are FSA signature guidelines:

- Spouses may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and CCC programs in which either has an interest, unless written notification denying a spouse this authority has been provided to the county office
- Spouses shall not sign on behalf of each other as an authorized signatory for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations, or other similar entities

For additional clarification on proper signatures contact your local FSA office.

Beginning Farmer Loans

FSA assists beginning farmers 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 than 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 also visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

2014 Acreage Reporting Dates

The following acreage reporting dates are applicable for Michigan:

November 15: Perennial Forage, Fall-Seeded Small Grains
January 15: Apples, Blueberries, Cherries, Grapes, Peaches
July 15: Cabbage Planted 3/31-5/31, Beans (Adzuki, Black Turtle, Cranberry, Great Northern, Dark Red Kidney, Light Red Kidney, White Kidney, Pinto, Small Red, White/Navy, Tebo, Yellow Eye), Forage Seeding, **all other crops**
August 15: Beans (all other), Cabbage (Planted 6/1-7/20)

Producers now have until January 15, 2014, to report crops that have a November 15, 2013, or December 15, 2013, reporting deadline without paying a late-file fee. Crops under this waiver include wheat and native and improved grasses intended for grazing or haying. The Risk Management Agency (RMA) did not grant a waiver so producers need to consult their crop insurance agent for deadlines for insured crops.

In order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements, all producers are encouraged to visit the County FSA office to file an accurate crop certification report by the applicable deadline.

Late file fees will be assessed for crops reported after the dates listed.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).