



Calhoun County News

August 2010

Issue No. 2

**Calhoun County FSA
USDA Service Center**
13464 Preston Dr. Ste. 100
Marshall, MI 49068
269-781-4263 ext. 2
269-781-3199 (fax)

Web Sites

www.fsa.usda.gov
www.sc.egov.usda.gov
www.fsa.usda.gov/mi

Hours

Monday – Friday
8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

County Committee

David Bosserd, Chairperson
Keith Lawrence, Vice-Chair
Rita Reincke, Member
Denice Raymond, Advisor

Staff

Kim Bates, Program Tech.
Bonnie Baxter, PT
Georgann Detty, PT
Ellen Kiessling, PT
Sandy Williams, PT
Jerry Motz, Field Asst.
Phillip DeYoung, FLM
Elizabeth Lake, CED

Dates to Remember

Aug 1 – Last day to request a farm combination or division
Sept 6 - Office closed in observance of Labor Day
Sept 30- Deadline to apply for 2008 SURE Program
Sept 30- Deadline to purchase NAP for alfalfa/hay/grass and fall seeded crops
Continues – Farm Storage Facility Loans
Continues – Continuous Conservation Reserve Program & CRP-SAFE



Conservation Reserve Program

Sign Up Scheduled thru August 27

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is the USDA's largest private-lands voluntary conservation program. CRP helps agricultural producers convert environmentally sensitive agricultural land to achieve conservation benefits. Certain practices are available on a continuous basis, however, it has been 5 years since the last competitive general CRP signup took place. Producers can offer land for **CRP general signup August 2 through August 27, 2010.**

To be eligible for CRP, the producer must have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months prior to the close of the CRP signup, August 27, 2010. Land must be cropland which has been planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity four of the six crop years from 2002- 2007, and which is physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity. Alfalfa and other multiyear grasses and legumes grown in a rotation not to exceed 12 years may be eligible for this year.

Benefits to CRP include:

- improved and increased wildlife habitat
- improved water quality
- increased soil quality
- reduce soil erosion
- increase air quality

In return for planting long-term resource conserving covers, FSA provides CRP participants annual rental payments, maintenance payments, cost-share and technical assistance. Don't miss this opportunity! Contact your local USDA Service Center for more information.

APPOINTMENTS ARE REQUIRED...

...your time is valuable, workload is high, staff is limited, so please call ahead! We really appreciate it.



CRP Cover Maintenance

Attention CRP participants: cover maintenance is your responsibility and must be done according to your conservation plan. Mowing for cosmetic purposes or general weed control is not allowed and will result in financial penalties. Mowing maintenance activities may be allowed once per year, only if it is needed to maintain the approved cover, and only on the portion of CRP in need of maintenance. Mowing is permitted between **August 1st and August 20th** to protect ground nesting wildlife and to allow adequate re-growth for winter cover. **Producers may request permission to perform maintenance activities outside the specified timeframe, but each request has to be approved by the Calhoun County Committee on a case-by-case basis. Plan ahead and contact the FSA office prior to conducting any maintenance on your CRP acres.**



Mowing on an annual basis is not an acceptable method of weed and woody growth control. The County Committee has the right to deny maintenance requests if previous mowing has not adequately solved the problem. Spraying an herbicide may be a viable option, but approval must be requested in writing and granted by the County Committee **BEFORE** you begin the maintenance activity.

ACRE Production Requirements

ATTENTION! Producers enrolled in ACRE are required to accurately submit a report of 2009 production for all ACRE farms no later than Sept. 1, 2010 for each covered commodity for which an acreage report of planted acres greater than zero was filed.

Acceptable documentation includes;

- Crop insurance and NAP records
- Commercial receipts, settlement sheets or load summaries of the crop that was sold
- Loan and LDP records
- Contemporaneous measurements, truck scale tickets, and contemporaneous diaries, as is necessary to verify the information if the crop was fed as long as the record is reliable or verifiable.

Maintenance of DCP/ACRE Program Acres

DCP and ACRE 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 COC determines the producer failed to demonstrate a good faith effort to control weeds and/or erosion.

Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE) Signup Continues

The Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE) provides benefits for farm revenue losses due to natural disaster that incurred in the crop years 2008 through September 30, 2011. To be eligible for SURE payments, a producer is required to obtain crop insurance on all crops in all counties or, if crop insurance is not available, to participate in the Non-Insured Assistance Program (NAP) except for grazed acreage. However, crop insurance or NAP coverage is no longer required for crops that are not of economic significance or those where the administrative fee required to buy NAP coverage exceeds 10% of the value of the coverage.



Eligible farmers and ranchers who meet the definition of Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, or Beginning Farmer or Rancher are exempt from the risk management purchase requirement.

The following are the conditions that trigger SURE payments:

- At least one crop of economic significance must suffer a 10% production loss due to an eligible disaster condition. A crop of economic significance is a crop that has contributed or would have contributed at least 5% or more of the total expected revenue from all crops on the farm;
- Producers in counties declared disaster counties by the Secretary of Agriculture, or in contiguous counties, or those who show proof of an individual loss of at least 50% are eligible to receive SURE payments for crop production or quality losses. Losses are measured with consideration to the whole-farm revenue, which includes crop insurance indemnities and commodity program payments, so that producers are not paid more than once for the same loss.

Calhoun County **did** have a Secretarial Disaster declaration for 2008; therefore, producers who obtained crop insurance or NAP coverage on all crops of economic significance will be eligible to apply for SURE. **The deadline to apply for the SURE on 2008 crops is September 30, 2010.**

Non-Insured Assistance Program (NAP) Policy Holders

Producers must file a *Notice of Loss* with their local FSA office within **15 calendar days** from the disaster occurrence or date damage to the specific crop acreage is apparent to the producer for yield losses or the final planting date for prevented planting. The Notice of Loss must be filed for *each* weather-related event or adverse natural occurrence that causes damage to or loss of the specific crop or commodity.

Producers are responsible for providing accurate and complete *Reports of Production* on a timely basis each and every year after harvest. The deadline to **report production is July 15** of the year following harvest. It is the producer’s responsibility to report the total amount of production for their entire unit. It is not FSA’s responsibility to determine the producer’s amount of production.

Sodbuster and Swampbuster Provisions

Most USDA programs require compliance with sodbuster and swampbuster provisions. These provisions require producers to follow an approved conservation system on highly erodible land planted to an annual crop, as determined by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). USDA participants are prohibited from converting wetlands for agricultural production purposes and planting an agricultural commodity on converted wetlands, as determined by NRCS. Be sure to have determinations made on any new land you plan to plant to annual crops. Swampbuster provisions state that converting a wetland to make possible the planting of a crop will result in the loss of all USDA benefits. To avoid this possibility it is strongly recommended that producers come into the FSA office ahead of time to file an AD-1026 for referral to NRCS. **It is necessary for NRCS to review any actions which could result in the modification of an area determined wet.** This includes any clearing of trees or brush (including fence rows), draining, dredging, filling, or plans to install, maintain, or improve tile.

Emergency Farm Loans Available

USDA/FSA emergency farms loans are available in Calhoun County to all qualified farm operators as a result of losses caused by the following weather conditions:



<i>Date Declared</i>	<i>Disaster Description</i>	<i>Final Date to Apply</i>
02/01/2010	Frost, freeze, excessive rainfall – 08/01/09 and continuing.	10/01/2010/
02/01/2010	Freeze, frost, excessive snow, low temps, cold weather – 01/01/09 to 07/24/09.	10/01/2010
02/01/2010	Excessive rain, flooding, flash flooding, hail, lightning, tornadoes, high winds – 04/01/09 to 09/01/09.	10/01/2010
02/01/2010	Drought 05/01/09 and continuing.	10/01/2010
06/24/2010	Series of tornadoes that occurred 04/05/10 through 06/06/10.	02/25/2011

Emergency loan funds may be used to:

- Restore or replace essential property;
- Pay all or part of production costs associated with the disaster year;
- Pay essential family living expenses;
- Reorganize the farming operation;
- Refinance certain debts.

All emergency loans must be fully collateralized. Producers can borrow up to 100 percent of actual production or physical losses, to a maximum amount of \$500,000. Loans for crop, livestock, and non-real estate losses are normally repaid within 1 to 7 years; depending on the loan purpose, repayment ability, and collateral available as loan security. In special circumstances, terms of up to 20 years may be authorized. Loans for physical losses to real estate are normally repaid within 30 years. In certain circumstances, repayment may be made over a maximum of 40 years. The current annual interest rate for emergency loans is 3.75 percent. Calhoun County producers should contact Phill DeYoung at 269-781-4263 ext. 2.

FSA Farm Loans

FSA makes both direct and guaranteed farm ownership and operating loans to family-size farmers who cannot obtain commercial credit from a bank or other lender. FSA loans can be used to purchase land, livestock equipment, feed, seed, and supplies. The loans can also be used to construct buildings or make farm improvements. If you're having trouble getting commercial credit, check with the county office staff about eligibility, as well as maximum loan amounts, rates, term and use of proceeds.

Farm Loan Limits

The new farm bill expands and enhances farm loan programs and preferences for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, increases loan limits for all borrowers, and makes equine farmers eligible for emergency loans, including:

- Increases direct ownership loan limit to \$300,000
- Increases operating loan limit to \$300,000.

Loans Available for Beginning Farmers, Socially Disadvantaged

FSA is authorized to assist beginning farmers and members of socially disadvantaged groups to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmers as a person whom 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 and does not own a farm in excess of 30% of the county's median size.

Rural Youth Loans

FSA can make loans to youths to establish and operate income producing projects in connection with their participation in 4-H clubs, Future Farmers of America, and similar organizations.

The maximum loan size is \$5,000. To qualify:

- Be between 10 and 20 years old;
- Live in a town of less than 10,000;
- Be unable to obtain a loan from other sources;
- Conduct a modest income producing project in a supervised program of work.

Applicants must also be capable of planning, managing, and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. Contact Phill DeYoung at 269-781-4263 ext. 2.

Foreign Landowner 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 with 90 days of the closing. Failure to submit the AFIDA form could result in civil penalties of up to 25 percent of the fair market value of the property.

County government offices, real estate agents, attorneys and others involved in real estate transactions are reminded to notify foreign investors of these reporting requirements.

ACRE Yield Data Deadline Extended

The deadline for 2009 production certification to comply with ACRE was extended until September 1, 2010. The extension is for completing both the farm benchmark yield (2004 through 2008) and the actual farm yield (2009). Participants in the 2009 ACRE program must certify their yields by September 1, 2010 to remain eligible for ACRE benefits.

CRP Land: Hope for beginning and minority farmers

Landowners who are willing to sell or lease Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres to beginning and minority farmers can get cash with the Transition Incentives Program (TIP). Signup for the new program, which began May 17, 2010, works this way: Contract Holders of land under CRP can get two extra years of CRP payments from the USDA if they agree to sell or lease the acreage under a long-term contract to a beginning or minority farmer, provided the transition is not to a family member. To be eligible, TIP requires that the retired or retiring farmer or rancher:

- Have land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) that is in the last year of the contract.
- Agree to allow the beginning or minority farmer make conservation and land improvements.
- Agree to sell, or have a contract to sell, or agree to long-term lease (a minimum of 5 years) the land under CRP contract to a beginning or minority farmer or rancher by Oct. 1 of the year the CRP contract expires.

The program was created by Congress in the 2008 Farm Bill in a bid to help beginning and minority farmers get over one of the biggest hurdles they face – finding affordable land. To learn more about program, producers should visit the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) county office or web site.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its program and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

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

Special accommodations will be made upon request for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment, or hearing impairment. If accommodations are required, please contact Elizabeth Lake at 269-781-4263 ext. 2.