

January 2013



## Calhoun County FSA Updates

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### Calhoun County FSA Office

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Director:**  
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### USDA URGES PRODUCERS TO COMPLETE AND RETURN THE 2012 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

The USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) mailed the 2012 Census of Agriculture during the last week of December and is asking for the help of farmers and ranchers in collecting accurate data.

The Census of Agriculture is only conducted once every five years and captures a count of all U.S. farms, ranches and those who operate them. Everyone who receives a Census form is required to return the Census form, even if they no longer farm or have never been involved in agriculture. Retired operators who own land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) or Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) are counted as farms and should complete the Census form.

Results of the Census are used by USDA, university research and extension, state and local officials, agribusinesses, farm organizations and commodity groups to make important policy and business decisions that impact people across the nation.

Please return the Census by February 4, 2013. Producers can also complete the Census online at [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov) after receiving the Census form through the mail. Information reported by producers is confidential. The results of the Census show the strength and diversity of U.S. agriculture.

Your answers to the Census can help grow your farm future, shape farm programs and boost services for you, your community and your industry. For questions or help completing the Census, contact NASS at (888) 424-7828.



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## **2011 SUPPLEMENTAL REVENUE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM APPLICATIONS**

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) will continue to accept SURE applications for 2011 crop losses through June 7, 2013. Under the 2008 Farm Bill, SURE authorizes assistance to farmers and ranchers who suffered crop losses caused by natural disasters occurring through Sept. 30, 2011.

Calhoun County producers are eligible to apply for SURE benefits if they experienced at least a 10 percent production loss that affects one crop of economic significance.

To meet program eligibility requirements, producers must have obtained a policy or plan of insurance through the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation or obtained Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage for all economically significant crops. Eligible farmers and ranchers who meet the definition of a socially disadvantaged, limited resource or beginning farmer or rancher do not have to meet this requirement. Forage crops intended for grazing are not eligible for SURE benefits.

For more information on SURE program eligibility requirements contact your local FSA office or visit the website at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/sure>.

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## **NONINSURED CROP DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (NAP)**

The noninsured crop disaster assistance program (NAP) is a federally funded program that helps producers reduce their risk when growing food and fiber crops, specialty crops and crops for livestock feed. These benefits are only available for crops for which the catastrophic level of crop insurance is not available. Application for coverage must be filed by the applicable crop's application closing date.

Production records for all crops must be reported to FSA no later than the acreage reporting date for the crop for the following year. FSA requires that any production reported in a loss year be verifiable according to Agency specifications. NAP losses must be reported within 15 days of the date the loss became apparent.

The following crops have a NAP application closing date of March 15, 2013: beans, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, melons (cantaloupe, honeydew, watermelon, etc.), peas, peppers, popcorn, potatoes, pumpkins, sorghum, sorghum forage, soybeans, squash, sunflowers and tomatoes.

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## **FARMING OPERATION CHANGES**

Producers who have bought or sold land, or added or dropped rented land from their operation must report those changes to the FSA office as soon as possible. A copy of the deed or recorded land contract for purchased property is needed to maintain accurate records with FSA. Failure to do so can lead to possible program ineligibility and penalties. While making record updates, be sure to update signature authorizations. Making record changes now will save time in the spring.

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## **HIGHLY ERODIBLE LAND AND WETLAND COMPLIANCE**

Landowners and operators are reminded that in order to receive payments from USDA, compliance with Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions is required. Farmers with HEL determined soils must apply tillage, crop residue, and rotation requirements as specified in their conservation plan.

Producers should notify FSA prior to conducting land clearing or drainage projects to insure compliance. If you intend to clear any trees to create new cropland, these areas will need to be reviewed to ensure any work will not jeopardize your eligibility for benefits.

Landowners and operators can complete form AD-1026 Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification to determine whether a referral to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is necessary.

For more information on Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation provisions, contact your local FSA Office or visit the FSA website at [www.fsa.usda.gov/](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/).

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## **POWER OF ATTORNEY**

For those who find it difficult to visit the county office because of work schedules, distance, health, etc..., FSA has a power of attorney form available that allows producers to designate another person to conduct business at the office. If interested, contact our office or any Farm Service Agency office for more information.

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## **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.

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## **BANK ACCOUNT CHANGES**

Current policy mandates that FSA payments be electronically transferred into a bank account. In order for timely payments to be made, producers need to notify the FSA county office when an account has been changed or if another financial institution purchases the bank where payments are sent. Payments can be delayed if the FSA office is not aware of updates to bank accounts and routing numbers.

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## **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.

All individuals who are not U.S. citizens, and 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 (FSA-153) could result in civil penalties of up to 25 percent 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.

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## **CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE**

Any person 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.

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## **SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS**

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, extension 2.

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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).