



December 2011

Chippewa-Luce-Mackinac Counties' News

USDA Service Center

Chippewa/Mackinac/Luce
County FSA
2487 Ashmun Street
Sault Ste Marie, MI 49783
906-632-9611(phone)
906-632-0341 (fax)
www.fsa.usda.gov/mi

Hours
Monday – Friday
8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Website
www.fsa.usda.gov

County Committee
Brent Cottle
Scott Hill
Max Macaulay

Committee Advisor
Jeff Holt

County Executive Director
Kaye Hillock-Vining

Office Staff
Melissa Gabbard
Lynn MacArthur

Farm Loan Manager
Betty Garrett

Farm Loan Officer
Bruce Stephenson



COMMUNICATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE – GovDelivery

GovDelivery is an electronic email system that allows FSA county offices to send out program notices, deadline notifications, and important updates directly to the producer via email. The FSA, like many other organizations, is trying to work smarter and be more efficient. Moving to electronic notifications via email will help conserve resources and save taxpayers dollars. Interested producers may subscribe to receive email updates by going to the USDA GovDelivery sign-up page found at www.fsa.usda.gov/subscribe. The FSA is using the internet, email and cell phones to better communicate with producers. Please provide your email addresses and cell phone numbers to your local FSA office. You can call this information in or stop by and drop it off.



2012 DCP/ACRE SIGN UP

Sign up for the 2012 program will begin January 23, 2012. **NOTE: Advance Direct Payments Are Not Available.** Farmers with rented ground must provide one of the following in order to participate.

- Cash lease signed by the owner
- The owner's signature on the CCC-509 contract
- They may sign a cash lease certification statement if the ground was rented by them in 2011.

DCP/ACRE sign up ends on June 1, 2012.



2010 SURE PROGRAM SIGN UP BEGAN NOVEMBER 14, 2011

As a critical element of the FSA farm safety net, the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments (SURE) provides financial assistance to producers who suffer qualifying losses due to natural disaster. Sign up for the SURE Program for the 2010 crop losses begins November 14, 2011. To qualify for SURE requires that producers implement risk management measures by enrolling in either crop insurance or the Non-Insured Crop Assistance Program (NAP) for all crops. SURE evaluates qualifying losses based on total farm revenue, not individual crop losses. Producers considered Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, or Beginning Farmer or Rancher may be eligible for SURE without a plan of insurance or NAP coverage.

SURE is available to eligible producers on:

- Farms in counties with Secretarial disaster declarations, including contiguous counties that have incurred at least a 10% crop production or quality loss, or both, on all crops grown by a producer nationwide, except grazed crops.
- Farms in which, for the crop year, the actual production on the farm because of disaster-related conditions is 50% or less than normal production of the farm.

Sign up will end on June 1, 2012.



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.



Preventing Fraud

The Farm Service Agency supports the Risk Management Agency in the prevention of fraud, waste and abuse of the Federal Crop Insurance Program. FSA has been, and will continue to, assist RMA and insurance providers by monitoring crop conditions throughout the growing season. FSA will continue to refer all suspected cases of fraud, waste and abuse directly to RMA. Producers can report suspected cases to the county office staff, the RMA office, or the Office of the Inspector General.

THINKING OF TILNG OR CLEARING LAND?

Don't forget the Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Provisions. Bringing new land into production by **clearing trees, improving drainage by tiling or dredging are potential violations of the HEL/WC rules.** Before you begin any land conversion project, please come into the county office to file form AD-1026. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will make an evaluation of your land to determine how to manage the wet areas of your land most efficiently. Checking ahead of time will help keep you eligible for USDA benefits.

BEGINNING FARMERS & RANCHERS

If you are a farmer or rancher who has substantially participated in the farming operation for at least three years but no more than 10 years, you may qualify for beginning farmer targeted loan funds with the Farm Service Agency.

The program is designed to assist these farmers by providing direct and guaranteed loans when they are unable to obtain financing from commercial credit sources.

If you believe this program could be of benefit to you, please contact the county office for more information. FSA loan officials will be happy to arrange an appointment to meet with you and discuss your options

SUCCESSOR-IN-INTEREST

Many FSA programs will allow payments to be made to heirs or successors when a program participant passes away. Also, contracts in programs such as CRP must be revised to reflect the successor(s) to a deceased participant's interest.

In the event of an FSA program participant's death, it is important that FSA be notified. Entities and joint operations that participate in FSA programs also need to notify FSA if a shareholder or member passes away.

FSA benefits are reported to the IRS and maintaining current, accurate records about participants is vital to ensuring that those payments are reported correctly.

ENROLL YOUR ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE CROPLAND INTO THE CONTINUOUS CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CCRP)

The Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP) is a voluntary enrollment program in which landowners and operators are given the opportunity to establish conservation covers on environmentally sensitive cropland to reduce soil erosion, improve wildlife habitat and food sources. Acreage is placed under contracts that range from 10 to 15 years in length. In return, the participant receives annual rental and maintenance payments, incentive payments for certain practices, and cost-share for practice establishment.

- To be eligible for the CCRP, participants and acreage must meet certain eligibility requirements. Provided that the eligibility requirements are met, FSA will automatically accept enrollment into the CCRP. As the program name implies, land can be enrolled on a continuous basis any time of the year.
- The CCRP is but one component of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Periodically, the USDA conducts whole field enrollment opportunities into the Conservation Reserve Program that are known as General Sign-ups. Under General Sign Ups, individual acreage enrollment offers are selected under a competitive process based on a score known as the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI). Eligible cropland that was not accepted during that general sign up can be re-offered during the next general sign up or offered under the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP).

For more information on the CRP and CCRP enrollment requirements, available practices and program payments, please contact your local FSA office or visit our website at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/cepd/crp.htm>



Foreign Buyers Notification

The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) requires all foreign owners of U.S. agricultural land to report their holding to the Secretary of Agriculture. Foreign persons who have purchased or sold land in the county are required to report the transaction to FSA within 90 days of the closing. Failure to submit the AFIDA form could result in civil penalties of up to 25% of the fair market value of the property.



SIGNATURE AUTHORITY REQUIREMENTS

County Offices are required to verify that a signature authority is on file in the county office before accepting a signature on any program or related documents on behalf of another.

Producers can present evidence of signature authority such as presentation of the original document, such as corporate charter, bylaws, court orders of appointment, trust agreement, last will and testament, or articles of partnership.

The FSA-211, Power-of Attorney form can also be completed to grant signature authority to another individual or entity.

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. This procedure does not apply to the commodity loan or Loan Deficiency Program. Spouses must have an FSA-211 on file to sign commodity loan documents or loan deficiency applications on behalf of each other.

Spouses may not sign FSA-211 on behalf of the other as an authorized signatory for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations or other similar entities.

Please contact this office for specific signature authority documents needed

KEEPSEAGLE VS. VILSACK SETTLEMENT

If you are a Native American who tried to get a farm loan or loan servicing from the USDA, you could receive benefits from a \$760 million class action settlement. The Class includes all Native American farmers and ranchers who:

- Farmed or ranched or attempted to farm or ranch between January 1, 1981 and November 24, 1999;
- Tried to get a farm loan or loan servicing from the USDA during that period; **and**
- Complained about discrimination to the USDA either on their own or through a representative during the time period.

You are not eligible for this Settlement if you filed a claim, or intend to file a claim, in another USDA discrimination case like Pigford I or Pigford II (Black farmers), Garcia (Hispanic farmers) or Love (Women farmers).

Because of a law passed by Congress, you are also not eligible for this Settlement if you **either**:

- Experienced discrimination only between January 1 and November 23, 1997; **or**
- Complained of discrimination only between July 1 and November 23, 1997

If you believe you are entitled to a part of this Settlement, additional information is available at www.IndianFarmClass.com or by calling 1-888-233-5506. you will need to file a claim by December 24, 2011 to get benefits.



CHANGE IN FARMING OPERATION

If you have bought or sold land, or if you have picked up or dropped rented land from your operation, make sure you report the changes to the office as soon as possible. You need to provide a copy of your deed or recorded land contract for purchased property. Failure to maintain accurate records with FSA on all land you have an interest in can lead to possible program ineligibility and penalties. Making the record changes now will save you time in the spring. Update signature authorization when changes in the operation occur. Producers are reminded to contact the office of a change in operations on a farm so that records can be kept current and accurate.

FARM STORAGE FACILITY LOANS (FSFL)

With the implementation of the 2008 Farm Bill, producers of eligible commodities can obtain low-interest financing to build or upgrade farm storage and handling facilities.

The maximum principal amount of a loan through FSFL is \$500,000. Participants are required to provide a down payment of 15-20 percent, with CCC providing a loan for the remaining 80-85 percent of the net cost of the eligible storage facility and permanent drying and handling equipment. Loan terms of 7, 10 or 12 years are available depending on the amount of the loan.

Interest rates for each term rate may be different and are based on the rate which CCC borrows from the Treasury Department. Contact your local FSA office for current interest rates.

Applications for FSFL must be submitted to the FSA county office that maintains the farm's records. An FSFL must be approved before any site preparation or construction begins. The following commodities are eligible for farm storage loans:

- Corn, grain sorghum, rice, soybeans, oats, peanuts, wheat, barley or minor oilseeds harvested as whole grain
- Corn, grain sorghum, wheat, oats or barley harvested as other-than-whole grain
- Forage storage

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, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.