

December 2013



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Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, and Leelanau County FSA Updates

Grand Traverse Area FSA Office

1501 Cass Street, Ste A
Traverse City, MI 49684

Phone: 231-941-0951
Fax: 855-292-1667

County Executive Director:
Gregory Shy

Farm Loan Manager:
James L. Monroe
Phone: 231-941-0951

Program Technicians:
Caleb Boge
Janet Howes
Jan Malik

County Committee:
Brent Wagner - Chair
David Noonan - Vice-chair
Bruce Cotton - Member
Joanne Gallagher - Member
Stanley Silverman - Member
Jaunita Send - Advisor

Next County Committee
Meeting: January 23, 2013
at 9:00 AM - Ballot Counting

Important Dates to Remember

- **December 25th** - Christmas Holiday – Office Closed
 - **January 1st** - New Year's Day Holiday – Office Closed
 - **January 2nd** - Certification deadline for Honey (number of Colonies)
 - **January 15th** - Final day to submit 2013 production data for APH purposes
 - **January 15th** - Final date to certify perennial orchard crops including Apples, Asparagus, Blueberries, Cherries, Grapes, Juneberries (Saskatoons), Peaches, Plums, and Strawberries
 - **February 1st** - Deadline to certify **Maple Sap** (number of eligible trees & Taps)
 - **February 18th** - Newly elected county committee members take office
 - **March 15th** - Final date to purchase NAP coverage on most spring seeded NAP crops.
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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.

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 Grand Traverse Area County FSA Office or postmarked by January 17, 2014.

Returned ballots will be counted at a special County Committee meeting on January 23, 2014, at 9:00 A.M. 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.

County committee members are an important component of the operations of FSA and provide a link between the agricultural community and USDA. Farmers and ranchers elected to county committees help deliver FSA programs at the local level, applying their knowledge and judgment to make decisions on commodity price support programs; conservation programs; incentive indemnity and disaster programs for some commodities; emergency programs and eligibility. FSA committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws.

To be an eligible voter, farmers and ranchers must participate or cooperate in an FSA program. A person who is not of legal voting age, but supervises and conducts the farming operations of an entire farm may also be eligible to vote.

The candidates in this year's election are:

Joanne Gallagher is nominated in LAA #3 in Grand Traverse County, consisting of Acme, East Bay, Garfield, Long Lake, Peninsula, and Whitewater Townships, to serve as a committee member. Ms. Gallagher is a third generation farmer with nearly forty years' experience, and is currently engaged in marketing beef & pork as well as growing crops including hay, corn, and cherries.

Bruce Cotton and Jacob Uitvlugt are nominated for LAA #5, consisting of all townships in Kalkaska County, to serve as a committee member. Mr. Cotton is a fourth generation crop farmer growing potatoes, green beans, wheat, and corn for more than twenty years. Mr. Uitvlugt grows hay and corn in addition to his beef operation, with thirty years of experience to his credit. He also serves on the Boardman Township Board of Review.

More information on county committees, such as the new 2013 fact sheet and brochures, can be found on the

FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov/elections or at a local USDA Service Center.

2014 Acreage Reporting Dates

Producers now have until **January 15, 2014**, to report crops that have a **November 15, 2013** reporting deadline without paying a late-file fee. Crops under this waiver include rye, 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 Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, and Leelanau County FSA office to file an accurate crop certification report by the applicable deadline.

As a reminder, the following acreage reporting dates are applicable for Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, and Leelanau County:

- **November 15** - Perennial Forage (Alfalfa, Hay, Mixed Hay, Pasture), Fall-seeded Wheat, Rye, and all other fall seeded small grains
- **January 2** - Honey
- **January 15** - Apples, Asparagus, Blueberries, Cherries, Grapes, Peaches, Plums, Strawberries, and all other perennial orchard crops
- **February 1** - Maple Sap
- **July 15** - Spring seeded grains, spring planted row crops, and Hops
- **September 30** - Aquaculture, Christmas Trees, Floriculture, Ginseng, Mushrooms, Nursery & Turfgrass Sod

The following exceptions apply to the above acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the above acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the above acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.
- If a perennial forage crop is reported with the intended use of "cover only," "green manure," "left standing," or "seed," then the acreage must be reported by July 15th.

Late file fees will be assessed for 2013 crops reported after September 15, 2013 and for 2014 crops with an initial November 15th final reporting date reported after January 15, 2014.

FSA Announces the Resumption of 2013 Crop Commodity Loan Disbursements

The Farm Service Agency has resumed processing and disbursement of 2013 crop commodity loans. Crop year 2013 commodity loan-making was suspended Oct. 1, 2013, to make changes necessary to accommodate the automatic funding reductions known as sequester.

The commodity loan programs provide interim financing to producers for agricultural commodities stored after harvest and then sold throughout the year. Producers requesting 2013 crop commodity loans on their harvested commodities now will have a 5.1 percent reduction to the loan amount upon its disbursement, due to the sequestration. Commodity loans issued by marketing associations and loan servicing agents are also subject to

the sequestration reduction.

During the period that loan-making was suspended, producers were still able to submit loan applications to their county FSA offices, marketing associations and loan servicing agents. The processing and disbursement of these applications will begin immediately.

For further information about commodity marketing loans, farmers may contact their local FSA office or go online to www.fsa.usda.gov.

Farm Storage Facility Loan Program

The Farm Storage Facility Loan Program (FSFL) allows producers of eligible commodities to obtain low-interest financing to build or upgrade farm storage and handling facilities.

The new maximum principal amount of a loan through FSFL is \$500,000. Participants are required to provide a down payment of 15 percent, with CCC providing a loan for the remaining 85 percent of the net cost of the eligible storage facility and permanent drying and handling equipment. Additional security is required for poured-cement open-bunker silos, renewable biomass facilities, cold storage facilities, hay barns and for all loans exceeding \$50,000. New 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.

The following commodities are eligible for farm storage facility loans:

- Corn, soybeans, oats, wheat, barley or minor oilseeds harvested as whole grain
- Corn, wheat, oats or barley harvested as other-than-whole grain
- Dry beans
- Hay
- Renewable biomass
- Fruits (including nuts) and vegetables - cold storage facilities
- Honey

For more information about FSFL please visit your FSA county office or www.fsa.usda.gov.

Microloan Program for Direct Loans of up to \$35,000.00

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) developed the Microloan (ML) program to better serve the unique financial operating needs of beginning, niche and small family farm operations.

FSA offers applicants a Microloan designed to help farmers with credit needs of \$35,000 or less. The loan features a streamlined application process built to fit the needs of new and smaller producers. This loan program will also be useful to specialty crop producers and operators of community supported agriculture (CSA).

Eligible applicants can apply for a maximum amount of \$35,000 to pay for initial start-up expenses such as hoop houses to extend the growing season, essential tools, irrigation and annual expenses such as seed, fertilizer, utilities, land rents, marketing, and distribution expenses. As financing needs increase, applicants can apply for a regular operating loan up to the maximum amount of \$300,000 or obtain financing from a commercial lender under FSA's Guaranteed Loan Program.

Individuals who are interested in applying for a microloan or would like to discuss other farm loan programs available should contact their local FSA office to set up an appointment with a loan official.

Selected Interest Rates December 2013

- 90-Day Treasury Bill: .125%
- Farm Operating Loans - Direct: 1.875%
- Farm Ownership Loans - Direct: 4.125%
- Farm Ownership Loans - Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher: 1.50%
- Emergency Loans: 2.875%
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (7 years): 2.000%
- Marketing Assistance Loans: 1.125%

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).