



July 2009

Gratiot County Farm Service Agency Newsletter



**Gratiot County
USDA Service Center**

Gratiot County FSA
301 Commerce Dr.
Ithaca, MI 48847
(989) 875-3900 (phone)
(989) 875-4500 (fax)
www.fsa.usda.gov/mi

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

County Committee
Scott Apple
Olan Humm
Charles Humphrey
Doreen Slavik

Gratiot County
Committee meets
the 2nd Wednesday of
each month

Staff
Melissa Dettloff, PT
Teri Hedrick, PT
Nancy Holland, PT
Sandy McCrimmon, PT
Jeff Pearsall, PT
Kay Perkins, PT
Tim Neuhardt, FLM
Steve Markley, CED

Field Reporters:
Ray Kindel
Dave Wright



Crop Reporting

The annual, timely and accurate reporting of acres for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage, can prevent loss of benefits for a variety of Farm Service Agency programs. All cropland on the farm must be reported to receive benefits from the Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program, Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE), marketing assistance loans, and loan deficiency payments.

Conservation Reserve Program acreage must be reported to receive annual rental payments, and crop acreage for Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) must also be reported. Crop reports, form FSA-578, Report of Acreage, must account for all cropland on a farm, whether idle or planted. Producers need to file their acreage reports by June 30, 2009 for fall seeded small grain crops and July 15th for all crops except fall seeded small grains.

Prevented Planting: Prevented planting needs to be reported no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date.

Failed Acreage: Farm Service Agency procedure states that you must report failed acreage at the time of disaster occurrence. This report will protect farm history and allows FSA to reconcile acreage requests from Risk Management Agency (Crop Insurance). Please file any potential crop losses and/or failed crop acreage timely.

- If you haven't reported your crops, call for an appointment -

DCP & ACRE Signup Deadline

Signup for the 2009 Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment (DCP) Program has been extended until August 14, 2009. **FSA will not accept any late-filed applications.** Signup in the ACRE option is also available through August 14, 2009.

FSA computes DCP Program payments using base acres and payment yields established for each farm. Eligible producers receive direct payments at rates established by statute regardless of market prices. For 2009, you may request to receive advance direct payments based on 22 percent of the direct payment for each commodity associated with the farm. Counter-cyclical payment rates vary depending on market prices and are issued only when the effective price for a commodity is statutorily set below its target price.

The electronic DCP (or e-DCP) service will save you time, reduce paperwork and speed up contract processing at FSA offices. It is available to anyone eligible to participate in the DCP Program. To access this on-line service, you must have an active USDA e-Authentication Level 2 account, which requires filling out an online registration form at <http://www.eauth.egov.usda.gov> followed by a visit to the local USDA Service Center for identity verification.

DCP Online Sign-up

Producers signing up for DCP online *must* be certain to double-check every contract when finished. FSA does not want you to miss out on your DCP payment. Contracts still requiring an action will have a status of "Initiated." These contracts are considered incomplete and cannot be paid. Contact the FSA office if you have questions on contract status.

Understanding CRP Mid-Contract Management



If you have questions on CRP contracts that must have Mid-Contract Management in 2009 or 2010, be certain to contact the FSA office. Do not ignore letters you may receive addressing this issue. **Mid-Contract Management is NOT maintenance.** Please do not confuse these terms. Mid-Contract Management *must* be performed on certain CRP contracts to ensure the original plant diversity, wildlife benefits, and protection of the soil and water resources. Available for cost-share and performed in the middle years of the contract, it promotes re-growth and continuing preservation of the plants listed in the conservation plan. Mid-Contract Management *is not* a basis for controlling weeds and woody growth on your CRP acreage.

CRP Cover Maintenance

Attention Conservation Reserve Program (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's needed to control weeds and woody growth on 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 COC on a case-by-case basis.*** Plan ahead and contact the FSA office prior to conducting any maintenance on your CRP acres.

All 2009 requests to mow will be reviewed by the COC. Mowing on an annual basis is not an acceptable method of weed and woody growth control. The COC has the right to deny maintenance requests if previous mowing has not adequately solved the problem. Spraying herbicides may be a viable option, but approval must be requested in writing and granted by the COC ***before*** you begin the maintenance activity.



Farm Reconstitution Data

The reconstitution - or recon - is the process of combining or dividing farms or tracts of land based on the farming operation. According to FSA reconstitution procedure, farms with the same owner and same operator must be combined under one farm serial number. Other reasons for reconstitution are:

- a change in ownership or a change in operation
- sale or purchase of a tract or farm

If the reconstitution is initiated by the farm operator, it must have the concurrence and signature of the owner or owners on that farm. Remember, to be effective for the current year, a recon must be requested by **August 1st**. Anything requested after this date will be processed in the following crop year. If you've already signed up for DCP or ACRE, a recon cancels the contract and another has to be initiated, signed, and approved in order to receive payment.

Beginning and Limited Resource Farmers & Ranchers

FSA has a program to assist beginning farmers and or members of socially disadvantaged groups 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.

Each member of an entity must meet the eligibility requirements. Loan approval is not guaranteed.

Additional program information, loan applications, and other materials are available at your local USDA Service Center. You may also visit www.fsa.usda.gov and www.nrcs.usda.gov.



Wetland Compliance

Producers renting or purchasing land that may have a converted wetland status need to check with the county office to learn if there are restrictions. The USDA does not want to deny a producer benefits due to wetland noncompliance.

The 1985 Farm Bill provides that, **unless exempt**, persons are **ineligible** for benefits under certain programs administered by USDA if they:

- plant an agricultural commodity on wetland that was converted after December 23, 1985
- convert a wetland after November 28, 1990

FSA may not approve any loan or loan guarantee to drain, dredge, fill, level, or otherwise manipulate a wetland, or to engage in any activity that results in impairing or reducing the flow, circulation or reach of water except in the case of activity related to the maintenance of certain previously converted wetlands.

**** Also, do not remove woodlots and fencerows or convert non-cropland with the intention to farm the land without first visiting your local FSA office. We will assist you in initiating the process to have wetland and highly erodible land determinations performed. ****

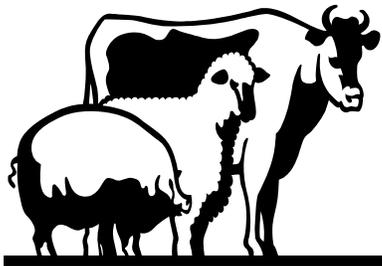
The following provides permitted uses and restrictions of certain wetlands for compliance with Wetland compliance provisions:

- Wetlands can be farmed under natural conditions. However, **wetlands cannot be converted**.
- Wetlands converted before November 28, 1990, cannot be planted to an agricultural commodity and retain eligibility for benefits.
- Wetlands converted after Nov. 28, 1990, **must be** either restored to wetland status or mitigated to regain eligibility for program benefits.
- Wetlands that can be farmed under natural conditions **cannot be manipulated in any way**, unless the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) determines the work would have a minimal effect on wetland values.
- Wetlands converted before December 23, 1985, can be farmed and maintained.

Additional information about wetland compliance is available at USDA Service Centers.



Rural Youth Loans



The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency (FSA) makes operating loans to individual rural youths age 10 through 20 to establish and operate income producing projects. These projects must be of modest size and be initiated, developed, carried out by rural youths participating in 4-H Clubs, FFA, or a similar organization or with a vocational teacher or county extension agent. The project must be an organized and supervised program of work. It must be planned and operated with the assistance of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan, and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. Contact your local FSA office for more details.

COC Election Information - Make a Difference: Nominate and Vote!

One of FSA's responsibilities is to conduct County Committee elections in an open manner that ensures accountability. FSA will provide local organizations representing socially disadvantaged groups with detailed information about the COC election process. The agency is reaching out to agricultural communities to get equitable representation on their county committees.

Groups representing socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, will be actively solicited for COC election candidates, and encouraged to fill out a nomination form (**FSA-669A**). Under-represented farmers and ranchers are encouraged to step up and participate in their county's COC election process. COC election fact sheets and nomination forms can be found online at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA> - under the Newsroom tab, click on County Election Committee Information. Nomination forms are also available at the Gratiot FSA Service Center.

Agriculture producers in LAA 2 (Fulton, Newark, New Haven, North Shade, and Washington Townships) will be voting for their representative on the Gratiot County Committee.

The nomination period began June 15, 2009. Nomination forms must be postmarked or received by FSA no later than August 3, 2009



Banking Changes?

You need to notify our office if you make any changes to your banking account.

It is important that any changes in your account, such as the type of account, bank mergers, routing number or account number, be provided to the county office promptly to avoid possible payment delay.

Thank you for your help!

Special Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations will be made, upon request, for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment, or hearing impairment to attend or participate in meetings or events sponsored by the Farm Service Agency. If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in one of our events, please call the FSA county office and we will be happy to make any needed arrangements.

Controlled Substances

Any person who is 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.

Dates to Remember	
July 3rd	FSA office closed
July 15th	Deadline to report all crops, including CRP, except fall-seeded small grains
August 1st	Last day to request a farm combination or division
August 14 th	Deadline for DCP and ACRE sign-up
Continues	Farm Storage Facility Loans
Continues	Continuous Conservation Reserve Program and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) - where available

Visit our Web site at: www.fsa.usda.gov/mi



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, audiotope, 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.