



January 2010

Ionia County FSA Bulletin

**Ionia County
USDA Service Center**

Ionia County FSA
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Ionia, MI 48846-2157
616-527-2098 (phone)
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www.fsa.usda.gov/mi

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

County Committee
Steven Buche
Jeffery Sandborn
Ronald Brownell
Mary Seidelman, Advisor

County Committee meets
1st Tuesday of the month
at 7:30 a.m.

Farm Program Staff
Nathan T. Prill, CED
Kathryn Marshall
Bill Brandt
Carolyn 'Lindy' Lindberg
Diana Spitzley

Farm Loan Staff
Paul E. Wagner, FLM
Sara Possehn, FLO
Vicki Carr

Field Reporters
Ken Carr

January 22, 2010



Notes from the Director:

There are two programs that you need to be especially aware of as we enter 2010. First, we have begun sign-up for DCP. This year the advance payment is 22% and can be disbursed from our office soon after you sign-up. Last year, we were working on this in March- however, with a June 1 deadline- we'd like to get everyone in as soon as we can to avoid bottlenecks this spring. Also, please give us a call before you stop by. It allows us to have all of your paperwork ready which should ultimately save some hours in your day.

Second, we have begun sign-up for the SURE program which covers losses resulting from weather conditions during the 2008 growing season. Since this crop disaster program is now farm revenue-based, payment rates will depend on your individual situation. Even if you do not think you had a loss in 2008, you will want to enroll for this program. Again, please give us a call before you come in and be sure to bring in all of your crop insurance records from 2008. We are going to try and make this go as smoothly as we can.

Finally, a note on our progress here at the Ionia USDA Service Center... In December, we worked overtime to ensure a smooth process disbursing the Dairy Economic Loss Assistance Program (DELAP) payments for dairy farmers affected by the rough economic conditions of the past year. Our agency went from Congressional authorization to program payment in just a few weeks resulting in over \$500,000 for the dairy farmers of Ionia County. We know it has been a tough year for everyone, but here's hoping 2010 is a prosperous and safe one on your farm. - NTP

SURE Signup

Signup for the 2008 Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments program (SURE) began on January 4, 2010. Producers who suffered crop production losses during crop year 2008 may sign applications now.

SURE provides crop disaster assistance payments to eligible producers on farms that have incurred crop production or crop quality losses. The program takes into consideration crop losses on all crops grown by a producer nationwide. SURE provides assistance in an amount equal to 60 percent of the difference between the SURE farm guarantee and total farm revenue. The farm guarantee is based on the amount of crop insurance and Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage on the farm.

Producers with a farming interest physically located in a county that was declared a primary disaster county or contiguous county by the Agriculture Secretary must have suffered at least a 10 percent production loss on a crop of economic significance. Producers must meet the risk management purchase requirement by either obtaining a policy or plan of insurance, under the Federal Crop Insurance Act or NAP coverage, for all economically significant crops. For 2008 crops, producers had the opportunity to obtain a waiver of the risk management purchase requirement through a buy-in provision. Producers considered socially disadvantaged, a beginning farmer or rancher, or a limited resource farmer may be eligible for SURE without a policy or plan of insurance or NAP coverage.

For more information on the new SURE program, please visit the county office or <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>.



DCP/ACRE Sign-Up

Sign-up for the DCP/ACRE program started October 1, 2009. The deadline for enrollment is June 1, 2010 and USDA will not accept any late-filed applications. Same as last year, farms with less than 10.0 acres of base will be ineligible for payment; however, exceptions apply for socially disadvantaged and limited resource producers.

As you are updating your records and getting land rental agreements from area landowners make sure your agreement contains the following:

- Landowner and Operator Signatures with Names Printed Alongside
- Signature Dates
- Type of Lease (Cash, Barter, Shares)
- Length of Lease with Start AND End dates
- Number of Acres Involved and Landowner Address (Not required but very helpful)

Same for 2010: Annual crop certification of all cropland on the farm is required. Highly Erodible and Wetland provisions apply.

For ACRE Participants:

Producers who participate in ACRE must annually report acreage **and production** to FSA by the acreage reporting deadlines.

Appeal Process

After an FSA official makes a decision on your request for USDA services or application, you will be sent a letter informing you of the decision and options you can pursue if you disagree.

Generally, program participants have three choices — an informal review with the original agency decision-maker, an opportunity for mediation and finally an appeal to the next level of authority within the agency.

Power of Attorney

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

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 with 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.

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.

Bank Account Changes

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



Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP)

FSA is currently accepting applications from biomass conversion facilities interested in participating in the Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP). BCAP provides financial assistance to eligible material owners (EMO) who deliver eligible biomass material to 'qualified' biomass conversion facilities for use as heat, power, bio-based products or bio-fuels. Initial assistance will be for the Collection, Harvest, Storage and Transportation (CHST) costs associated with the delivery of eligible materials. Once an agreement is signed between FSA and a facility, and funding becomes available, FSA may begin approving applications for matching payments from EMOs.

A biomass material owner is eligible to receive payments for two years. The purpose of the matching payments is to assist biomass producers with the CHST cost of delivering biomass to a qualified biomass conversion facility. Once a facility becomes qualified, eligible material owners or producers who deliver biomass to that facility may be eligible to receive CHST payments.

Eligible material owners or producers, who market eligible material to a qualified biomass conversion facility, may apply for the matching CHST payment at their FSA county office. An application must be submitted before the eligible material is sold and delivered to a qualified biomass conversion facility. After the product is delivered, a producer must provide FSA with documentation of product quantity, quality and payment rate. County offices will validate payment requests with information in the county office and information provided under the terms of MOUs with the qualified biomass conversion facilities.

IRS Form 1099-G

Producers annually receive CCC-1099Gs detailing payments producers have received from FSA. This year, the 2009 Advance payments producers received from the Direct and Counter-Cyclical Payment (DCP) Program were processed as overpayments and offset from the 2009 Final payments. The 2009 Advance payments will not be reflected on the CCC-1099G's producers receive.



Continuous CRP

The Continuous Conservation Reserve Program is a private lands environmental improvement program that allows participants the opportunity to enroll acreages in conservation practices that will reduce soil erosion, improve water and soil quality, and provide wildlife habitat and food sources. Continuous CRP program participation is voluntary. Eligible landowners enter into contracts that range from 10 to 15 years in length. In return, the landowners will receive annual rental and maintenance payments, incentive payments for certain activities, and cost share for establishment.

To be eligible for enrollment in the Continuous CRP, participants and acreage must meet certain requirements. Provided the eligibility requirements are met, FSA will automatically accept enrollments of acreage into Continuous CRP. Landowners may enroll in the program at any time during the year.

For more information on Continuous CRP enrollments or local CRP-SAFE availability, please contact your local FSA office or visit <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pas/publications/facts/html/crpcont03.htm>

Loans for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) can make and guarantee loans to socially disadvantaged applicants to buy and operate family size farms and ranches. Funds specifically for these loans are reserved each year. A socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of the group without regard to their individual qualities. For purposes of this program, socially disadvantaged groups are women, African Americans, American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, and Asians and Pacific Islanders. Contact Paul Wagner *Farm Loan Manager* or Sara Possehn *Farm Loan Officer* at (616) 527-2098 for more details and assistance in applying.

There are two spiritual dangers in not owning a farm. One is the danger of supposing that breakfast comes from the grocery store, and the other that heat comes from the furnace.

-Aldo Leopold (1949)

County Committee Election Results

Ron Brownell was elected to serve another 3 year term on the FSA County Committee (COC) for LAA 1 through 2012. We appreciate all of the voters for taking the time to complete the election ballot. The county committee system works only because of your participation!

The vote totals were:

	<u>Votes Counted</u>
Ronald Brownell:	118
Sandra Kay Meyers:	2
Mark Hartman:	2

Mark Hartman is the 1st Alternate which was decided by lot as required by program guidelines.

Dates to Remember

Feb 15	Office Closed for President's Day
Continues	Continuous Conservation Reserve Program Sign-up

Special Accommodations

Special accommodations will be made upon request for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment or hearing impairment. If accommodations are required, individuals should contact the county FSA office staff directly or by phone.

Visit our Web site at
<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/>

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