



August 2010

# Ionia County FSA Bulletin

**Ionia County  
USDA Service Center**

**Ionia County FSA**  
431 Swartz Ct, Ste 300  
Ionia, MI 48846-2157  
616-527-2098 ext. 2  
616-527-9055 (fax)  
www.fsa.usda.gov/mi

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

**County Committee**  
Steven Buche  
Jeffery Sandborn  
Ronald Brownell  
Allison Badder, Advisor

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

**Farm Program Staff**  
Jenifer A. Taylor, CED  
Kathryn Marshall  
Bill Brandt  
Carolyn 'Lindy' Lindberg  
Diana Spitzley

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

**Field Reporter**  
Ken Carr

## Conservation Reserve Program General Sign-Up August 2 through August 27, 2010

Conservation Reserve Programs (CRP's) help agricultural producers use environmentally sensitive land for conservation benefits. Producers enrolled in CRP plant long-term, resource-conserving covers to control soil erosion, improve water and air quality, and develop wildlife habitat. Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides participants with annual rental payments and cost-share assistance. CRP Contracts are binding contracts, with duration of 10 to 15 years. CRP is a voluntary program administered by the FSA while technical determinations are provided by other USDA agencies and partners.



**Eligible Producers** - To be eligible for CRP enrollment, a producer must have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months prior to August 27, 2010. Some provisions apply; contact the FSA office for more information.

**Eligible Land** - To be eligible for CRP, land must be **cropland** (including field margins) that is planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity **four of the six crop years from 2002 to 2007**. Alfalfa or other multiyear grasses and legumes grown in a rotation not to exceed 12 years may be eligible. In addition, cropland must meet one of the following criteria:

- Have a weighted average erosion index of eight or higher; or
- Be expiring CRP acreage; or
- Be located in a national or state CRP conservation priority area.

**CRP Payments** - FSA provides CRP participants with annual rental payments, cost-share assistance and certain incentive payments when applicable:

- **Rental Payments** – Every October FSA disperses annual rental payments to participants who fully comply with the CRP rules and regulations. Rental rates are based on the relative productivity of the soils within the county and the average dry land cash rent or cash rent equivalent. The Ionia County office staff will work with each producer to calculate the maximum CRP rental rate for each offer prior to enrollment. Producers may offer land below the rate to increase the likelihood that FSA will accept their offer.
- **Cost-share Assistance** - FSA provides cost-share assistance to participants who establish approved cover on eligible cropland. The cost-share assistance cannot exceed **50 percent** of the participant's costs to establish approved practices.

**Submitting and Ranking CRP Offers** – Land that is not currently enrolled in CRP, or land that the CRP contract is set to expire September 30, 2010, that meet the above requirements may submit an offer. FSA collects all the data for the submitted land and ranks the offers in accordance to the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI). Producers have the opportunity to work with FSA to maximize their land's EBI points to increase the likelihood of acceptance. **All offers must be submitted by August 27, 2010.**

**Due to the short time frame of this program, appointments are required!!!**  
Please call us at (616) 527-2098 ext. 2 to schedule an appointment.



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## SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in any meeting or event should contact Jenifer Taylor by phone at (616) 527-2098 ext. 2 or e-mail [jenifer.taylor@mi.usda.gov](mailto:jenifer.taylor@mi.usda.gov).



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## PAYMENTS...

With the upcoming cycle of program payments to be issued beginning in October, we encourage all participants to review their direct deposit information to ensure that FSA records remain accurate. Direct deposit changes that are not reported timely may cause delays in payments.

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## 2010 DISTRICT FALL TREE SALE

Contact Melissa Eldridge by phone at (616) 527-2620 or visit [www.ioniacd.org](http://www.ioniacd.org) for more information.

## MARKETING ASSISTANCE LOANS

Marketing Assistance loans are commodity loans available to producers who share in the risk of producing the crop. To be eligible, you must maintain beneficial interest in the crop through the time of application. Beneficial interest means retaining the ability to make decisions about the commodity; responsibility for loss or damage to the commodity; and title to the commodity. Once beneficial interest in a commodity is lost, the commodity is ineligible for loan — even if you regain beneficial interest.

Commodity loan eligibility also requires you comply with conservation and wetland protection requirements, beneficial interest requirements, report how you use cropland acreage on the farm and ensure that the commodity meets CCC minimum grade and quality standards. For commodities to be eligible they must have been produced by an eligible producer, be in existence and in a storable condition and be merchantable for food, feed or other uses as determined by CCC. The quality of the commodity in farm storage must be maintained throughout the term of the loan. Producers do not have to participate in the Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program to be eligible for commodity loans.

Violating provisions of a marketing assistance loan may trigger administrative actions such as assessing liquidated damages, calling the loan and denial of future farm-stored loans. The most common violations are removing or disposing of a commodity being used as loan collateral without prior authorization and providing an incorrect quantity certification.

## 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. Foreign persons who 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 could result in civil penalties of up to 25% 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.

## RISK MANAGEMENT AGENCY

FSA and RMA are working together to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse in the Federal Crop Insurance Program. A few of the ways that FSA is helping include:

- assisting RMA and AIP's in monitoring crop conditions throughout the growing season
- referring all suspected cases of fraud, waste, and abuse about the Federal Crop Insurance Program to RMA
- providing producer information to RMA and AIP's to assist in claim audits, inspections, and quality control reviews.

Producers may also report suspected cases of fraud, waste, and abuse to their local County or RMA office.

## NON-INSURED CROP DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (NAP)

NAP is available to all producers of non insurable crops through the FSA. Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, Risk Management Division (RMA) insures only specific crops in each county.

As the current legislation reads, if a natural disaster condition occurs, in order for a producer to be eligible for any assistance through the FSA, all crops of economic significance must be insured either through RMA and/or FSA for those non insurable crops.

The importance of this program is not realized until a disaster occurs. Please review your farm plans for the upcoming growing season and determine if NAP would benefit you. The cost to insure those crops through the FSA is \$250.00 per crop, not to exceed \$750.00 per county and \$1875.00 per producer for all counties. Those non-insurable crops include:

- **Forage** (alfalfa, alfalfa mix, clover) – Deadline 9/30/2010
- **Spring-planted vegetables** (including cucumbers) – Deadline 3/15/2011

**Please note:** This is not a complete listing of eligible crops for the NAP program.

If you would like additional information on this program, please contact the FSA Office.

## MAINTENANCE OF DCP/ACRE PROGRAM ACRES

DCP participants are required to protect all idle contract acres from erosion and weeds. Idle fields designated as "contract acres" must have a sod cover, crop residue or volunteer grasses. Weeds are not an acceptable cover and must be mowed. Failure to control weeds on contract acres will cost you program benefits if the County Committee (COC) determines the producer failed to demonstrate a good faith effort to control weeds and/or erosion.

## POWER OF ATTORNEY

Did you know you can retain an agent to act on your behalf for programs and transactions authorized under the 2008 Farm Bill and most other FSA administered programs? This can be done by completing an FSA-211: Power of Attorney. The form is available at your local USDA Service Center or on-line at <http://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov>. Forms completed outside FSA offices must be notarized. To find out more, call the office.

## FARM LOAN PROGRAMS

FSA offers loans for farmers to purchase farmland and finance agricultural operations. FSA loan programs are designed to help producers who are temporarily unable to obtain private or commercial credit. In many cases, applicants are beginning farmers who have insufficient net worth to qualify for financing through a commercial lender. In other instances, borrowers might have suffered setbacks from natural disasters or might be persons with limited resources.

Rural youth loans, loans to beginning farmers and loans for socially disadvantaged applicants are also available through FSA. For details just contact the county office for an appointment with a farm loan officer.



## BE A PART OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN YOUR COUNTY

Farmland owners, operators and tenants of legal voting age are eligible to run for office and vote in COC elections.

The Local Administrative Area (LAA) that is up for election this year is LAA #2 which includes *Keene, Boston, Berlin, Campbell and Odessa Townships*.

County committees are a critical part of federal program delivery in the County Offices. They help run the FSA programs and make them fit the needs of local farmers.

**Ballots will be mailed in early November and must be returned by December 6, 2010.**

Our County Office records may not show all of the people who are eligible to vote in the COC Elections. If you think you are eligible but have never received a ballot please contact us so we can get you on the voter list.

## 2008 SURE SIGN-UP DEADLINE

SURE provides crop disaster assistance payments to eligible producers on farms that 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.

The deadline for 2008 SURE program payment applications is **September 30, 2010**.

**There are no provisions for late-file applications.** Applications not filed by September 30, 2010, regardless of the reasons why, will not receive a payment because of lack of funding.

## ATTENTION LANDOWNERS AND PRODUCERS

- Do you intend to clear timber areas to create or to expand existing crop areas?
- Are you converting a pasture field into a crop field?
- Are there any areas on your farm(s) that you are considering cropping that have not been cropped in recent years?
- Is there a wet spot in a field that you want drain to make cropping easier?
- Are you disturbing a wildlife habitat area of any type?
- Are you doing anything different on your farm(s) this year?
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These are Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provision questions that need to be considered each year by producers to assure that they may remain eligible for USDA benefits. If you have any questions or concerns that something you plan to do on your farm could jeopardize your eligibility for benefits, please contact your FSA and/or NRCS representative **before** you begin work.

**Don't Forget to Make an Appointment for CRP Sign-Up!**

### ACRE YIELD DATA DEADLINE EXTENDED

The deadline for 2009 production certification to comply with ACRE was extended until September 1, 2010. The extension is for completing both the farm benchmark yield (2004 through 2008) and the actual farm yield (2009). Participants in the 2009 ACRE program must certify their yields by September 1, 2010 to remain eligible for ACRE benefits.

### eGOV CUSTOMER REGISTRATION PROCESS

1. Access your website of interest:
  - USDA Customer Statement <http://customerstatement.usda.gov>
  - Electronic LDP Signup [http://www.fsa.usda.gov/egov/eldp\\_default.htm](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/egov/eldp_default.htm)
  - Electronic DCP Signup [http://www.fsa.usda.gov/egov/edcp\\_default.htm](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/egov/edcp_default.htm)
2. Create an online user profile and apply for Level 2 access
3. Respond to the verification email within 7 days of receipt.
4. Visit the County Office in person and provide photo identification to the Local Registration Authority in order to receive Level 2 Activation.
5. Access Level 2 applications within 1 hour after profile has been activated.

Dates to Remember	
Aug. 2 <sup>nd</sup> – Aug. 27 <sup>th</sup>	CRP General Sign-Up
Sept. 1 <sup>st</sup>	Deadline for ACRE Production Certification
Sept. 6 <sup>th</sup>	Labor Day – Office Closed
Sept. 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Deadline for Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Applications for Asparagus
Sept. 30 <sup>th</sup>	Deadline to Apply for 2008 SURE Payments
Oct. 11 <sup>th</sup>	Columbus Day – Office Closed
Nov. 5 <sup>th</sup>	County Committee Election Ballots Mailed
Continues	Farm Storage Facility Loans
Continues	Continuous Conservation Reserve Program Sign-up

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<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/>

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