

May 2013



Kent County FSA Updates

Kent County FSA Office **CRP Sign-Up Starts May 20th**

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USDA will conduct a four-week general sign-up for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), beginning May 20 and ending on June 14. CRP protects the nation's natural resources through voluntary participation, while providing significant economic and environmental benefits to rural communities across the United States.

Currently, about 27 million acres are enrolled in CRP. Producers that are accepted in the program can receive cost-share assistance to plant long-term, resource-conserving covers and receive an annual rental payment for the length of the contract which is 10-15 years.

Contracts on 3.3 million acres of CRP are set to expire on Sept. 30, 2013. Producers with expiring contracts or producers with environmentally sensitive land are encouraged to evaluate their options under CRP.

For more information on CRP and other FSA programs, visit a local FSA service center or www.fsa.usda.gov.

Farm Record Changes

August 1, 2013, is the deadline to provide changes to your farm records at the local FSA office for the current crop year. If you are changing your operation entity type, adding or dropping cropland/farms, or adding entities to your operation, contact the FSA County Office by August 1.

Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) Status

The MILC software is now available. Be sure you have your milk production receipts turned in to the office. The MILC program for FY 2013 has posted a payment for the following months:

October 2012	\$0.02368
November 2012	\$0.00
December 2012	\$0.00

January 2013	\$0.11800
February 2013	\$0.52224
March 2013	\$0.75456

2013 Kent County Election - LAA 2

LAA 2 in Kent County is the Local Administrative Area up for election 2013. The LAA includes the following townships: Tyrone, Solon, Sparta, Algoma, Alpine, Walker, Grand Rapids, and Ada. Please consider nominating yourself or another producer to represent this area of the county.

2013 FSA County Committee Elections

The election of agricultural producers to the Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees is important to all farmers and ranchers, whether beginning or long-established, large or small operation. It is crucial that every eligible producer participate in these elections because FSA county committees are a link between the agricultural community and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

County Committee (COC) members are a critical component of FSA operations. The intent is to have the COC reflect the makeup of the producers and represent all constituents. This means wherever possible, minorities, women or lower income producers need to be on the committee to speak for these underrepresented groups.

County committees provide local input on:

- Commodity price support loans and payments
- Conservation programs
- Incentive, indemnity and disaster payments for some commodities
- Emergency programs
- Payment eligibility.

FSA county committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws and members apply their judgment and knowledge to make local decisions.

Election Period

June 17, 2013 – The nomination period begins.

Aug. 1, 2013 – This is the last day to file nomination forms (FSA-669A) at the local USDA Service Center.

Nov. 4, 2013 – Ballots mailed to eligible voters.

Dec. 2, 2013 – Last day to return completed ballots to the USDA Service Center.

Jan. 1, 2014 – Newly elected county committee members take office.

Who Can Hold Office

To hold office as a county committee member, a person must meet the basic eligibility criteria:

- Participate or cooperate in a program administered by FSA
- Be eligible to vote in a county committee election
- Reside in the local administrative area (LAA) in which the person is a candidate.

Not have been:

- Removed or disqualified from the office of county committee member, alternate or employee
- Removed for cause from any public office or have been convicted of fraud, larceny, embezzlement or any other felony
- Dishonorably discharged from any branch of the armed services.

Nominations

To become a nominee, eligible individuals must sign nomination form FSA-669A. The form includes a statement that the nominee agrees to serve if elected. This form is available at USDA Service Centers and [online](#).

Nomination forms for the 2013 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA Service Center by close of business on Aug. 1, 2013.

Agricultural producers who participate or cooperate in an FSA program may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee. Individuals may nominate themselves or others as a candidate. Additionally, organizations representing minority and women farmers or ranchers may nominate candidates. Nomination forms are filed for the county committee of the office that administers a producer's farm records.

Who Can Vote

Agricultural producers of legal voting age may be eligible to vote if they participate or cooperate in any FSA program. A person who is not of legal voting age but supervises and conducts the farming operations of an entire farm also may be eligible to vote. More information about voting eligibility requirements can be found in the FSA fact sheet titled "FSA County Committee Election – Eligibility to Vote and Hold Office as a County Committee Member." Producers may contact their local USDA Service Center for more information.

New Crop Certification Deadlines 2013 Crop Year and Continuing

Due to changes in program provisions it is even more important for producers to timely file crop acreage reports on their farms.

Crop acreage reports are essential to maintain eligibility for multiple FSA programs, and to establish a record of historical cropping. Farm Bill legislation continues the crop reporting requirement.

Producers are reminded of the importance to accurately report the crop, crop acreage, intended use, irrigation practice, planting date and producer shares. Prevented planted acres must be reported within 15 days of the final planting date. Failed acres must be reported to FSA within 15 days of when the loss becomes apparent for non-insurable crops and prior to disposition of the crop.

Crop Reporting Deadlines:

- **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

Late Fees:

Due to changes in program provisions for timely-filed crop reports, late fees for 2013 Crop Year Certifications will be waived. No such provision currently exists for the following crop year; **beginning with the November 15,**

2013 deadline for 2014 Crop Year Perennial Forage certifications a late fee will be assessed.

DCP/ACRE Sign-Up Continues

The sign-up period for DCP and ACRE are still open. Producers are encouraged to sign up for DCP before the Aug. 2, 2013, deadline. An even earlier deadline is for ACRE, which will end June 3, 2013.

The 2013 DCP and ACRE program provisions are unchanged from 2012, except that all eligible participants in 2013 may choose to enroll in either DCP or ACRE for the 2013 crop year. This means that eligible producers who were enrolled in ACRE in 2012 may elect to enroll in DCP in 2013 or may re-enroll in ACRE in 2013. Likewise, producers who were enrolled in DCP may opt for ACRE enrollment.

Call your local FSA County Office today to make your appointment.

[Read more about DCP and ACRE](#) or contact the FSA County Office for more information.

Adjusted Gross Income

Every producer who participates in FSA and NRCS programs must annually certify compliance with AGI rules and regulations. This certification takes place on form CCC-933, Average Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) Certification and Consent to Disclosure of Tax Information (for 2013), and refers to certain program benefits being affected if the producer exceeds \$500,000.00 of nonfarm average AGI; \$750,000.00 of farm average AGI; and \$1,000,000.00 of both farm and nonfarm average AGI.

The review and verification of AGI compliance certifications submitted by program participants is required to ensure the accuracy of payments and the integrity of these programs. USDA and the Internal Revenue Service have established an electronic information exchange process for verifying compliance with the adjusted gross income (AGI) provisions for farm programs. IRS will report the results of this process to FSA on a regular basis. FSA will use this information to determine whether a program participant complies with the average AGI limitations, or if further review is required. Written consent is required from each producer or payment recipient for the tax review process. The good news is that no actual tax data will be included in the report that IRS sends to USDA.

The CCC-933 form may be obtained from local FSA and NRCS offices or online at: <http://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov/efcommon/eFileServices/eForms/CCC933.PDF>

Wetland Provisions

Potential violations of the wetland rules include bringing new land into production by clearing trees (including fence rows) or improving drainage by tiling or dredging. **Before you BEGIN any of these projects, you need to fill out form AD-1026.**

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will complete a certified evaluation of the tract to determine if there are areas that are wet and highly erodible. This process takes **at least** 60 days to complete. NRCS will notify you by mail of the results.

With the new mapping system, updated imagery clearly shows where land has been cleared or drained. The penalty for a wetland violation can be loss of **all** USDA benefits back to the year of conversion. By checking with our office before you start a project, you can remain in compliance and avoid the penalties. Plan ahead, sign form AD-1026 and get your determination completed before clearing trees and/or tiling.

NRCS Conservation Programs:

A portion of NRCS-Michigan 2013 EQIP funds are designated for On-Farm-Energy activities. Producers can receive financial assistance to have an energy audit conducted on their farm by an authorized entity. Producers who have a completed energy audit can receive financial assistance for implementing designated conservation practices. Practices eligible for On-Farm Energy Initiative funds are identified on the EQIP practices list. Applications for EQIP funds can be submitted throughout the year. Please contact your local NRCS Grand Rapids Field Office at (616) 942-4111 ext. 3 for more information.

Important Dates to Remember

- **May 20th** - 45th CRP Sign-up begins
- **May 27th** - Office closed in observance of Memorial Day
- **May 31st** - Final date to request 2012-crop feed grain, oilseed loan or LDP
- **June 3rd** - 2013 ACRE Sign-up ends
- **June 7th** - 2011 SURE Sign-up ends
- **June 14th** - CRP Sign-up ends
- **June 30th** - Final date for late-filed certifications for fall-2012 seeded crops, Hay, and Mixed Forage
- **July 4th** - Office closed in observance of Independence Day
- **July 15th** - 2012 production reporting deadline for 2012 ACRE program
- **July 15th** - 2013 crop reporting deadline
- **August 2nd** - 2013 DCP Sign-up ends