



January, 2009

Issue No. 1

COVERED BRIDGE COURIER

St. Joseph County FSA

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Centreville, MI 49032
269-467-6336, EXT 2
269-467-4356 FAX

www.fsa.usda.gov
www.sc.egov.usda.gov

Hours

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

County Committee

Daniel Sharp
James Struble
Timothy Wagner
Ann Kauffman, Advisor

Staff

Robert Avery, FA
Gayle Britten, PT, FA
Phillip DeYoung, FLM
Michelle Fambro, PT
Carol Fetterolf, PT
Sharon Hoch, CED
Dana Sherman, PT

DATES TO REMEMBER IN 2009:

1/31/09 – Final date to request a 2008-crop wool or mohair loan or LDP, or unshorn pelt LDP

2/1/09 – Deadline to purchase NAP coverage for onions

2/16/09 – Office closed in honor of Presidents' Day

3/15/09 – Deadline to purchase NAP coverage for spring-seeded crops

3/31/09 – Final date to request a 2008-crop barley, honey, oats, or wheat loan or LDP

5/31/09 – Final date to request a 2008-crop corn, grain sorghum, or soybean loan or LDP

Ongoing - SAFE Program Enrollment

Ongoing - CRP Continuous Signup

Ongoing - Farm Storage Facility Loans

MAKE APPOINTMENT FOR DCP

Signup has started for the 2009 Direct and Counter-Cyclical Payment (DCP) Program for farms with base acres. You can sign up online or at local USDA service centers. Signup will continue until **June 1, 2009**. **Late-filed applications will no longer be accepted. You must sign up by June 1, 2009.**

The electronic DCP (or eDCP) service is available to anyone eligible to participate in the DCP Program and can be accessed at: www.fsa.usda.gov/dcp. To access this on-line service, you must have an active USDA eAuthentication 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.

FSA computes DCP 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. FSA will issue advance direct payments, if requested. Counter-cyclical payment rates vary depending on market prices and are issued only when the effective price for a commodity is below its target price.



We are currently taking appointments for DCP. You will need to fill out new eligibility paperwork; review your aerial photos, if you have not already; inform us of any changes to your farming operation, banking information, etc. Please bring necessary paperwork with you.

ACRE PROGRAM SIGNUP

Producers who are eligible for the DCP will also be eligible to enroll in the Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) Program. The enrollment period for the ACRE Program will begin in the spring. You may first enroll in the DCP Program, receive advance direct payments, and then later modify your enrollment to include the ACRE Program; or you may wait and elect to enroll in DCP and ACRE at the same time in spring 2009.

Once ACRE is elected for the farm it will remain enrolled in ACRE for the duration of the 2008 Farm Bill, regardless of owner and/or operator changes. If you enroll a farm in ACRE in 2009, it will be in ACRE through 2012. The decision to enroll in ACRE is irrevocable.

ACRE provides a safety net based on State revenue losses and acts in place of the price-based safety net of counter-cyclical payments under the DCP. A farm's payment is based on a revenue guarantee calculated using a 5-year average State yield and the most recent 2-year National price for each eligible commodity. The 2-year price average for the 2009 crop will be based on the 2007 and 2008 crop years.

An ACRE payment is issued when both the State and the farm have incurred a revenue loss. The payment is based on 83.3% (85% in 2012) of the farm's planted acres, times the difference between the State ACRE guarantee and the State revenue, times the ratio of the farm's yield, divided by the State expected yield. The total number of planted acres for which a producer may receive ACRE payments cannot exceed the total base on the farm. A farm participating in ACRE will not receive counter-cyclical payments; the farm's direct payment is reduced by 20%; and the marketing assistance loan rates are reduced by 30%.

DIRECT PAYMENTS AND MAXIMUM COUNTER-CYCLICAL RATES FOR COVERED COMMODITIES, CROP YEAR 2009

Commodity	Units	Target Price	Direct Payment Rate	Loan Rate	Minimum Effective Price	Maximum Counter-Cyclical Payment Rate
Barley	\$/bu.	2.24	0.24	1.67	2.09	0.15
Corn	\$/bu.	2.63	0.28	1.95	2.23	0.40
Grain Sorghum	\$/bu.	2.57	0.35	1.95	2.30	0.27
Oats	\$/bu.	1.44	0.024	1.39	1.354	0.086
Soybeans	\$/bu.	5.80	0.44	5.00	5.44	0.36
Hard Red Winter Wheat	\$/bu.	3.92	.52	3.09	3.27	.65
Soft Red Winter Wheat	\$/bu.	3.92	.52	2.29	3.27	.65
Soft White-Wheat	\$/bu.	3.92	0.52	2.15	3.27	.65

NOMINATIONS BEING ACCEPTED FOR COC ADVISOR

The St. Joseph County Committee is seeking candidates interested in serving as a County Committee Advisor. Advisors serve as a voice for socially disadvantaged farmers, to ensure fair representation. Socially disadvantaged members include women, African Americans, American Indians, Hispanics, Asian and Pacific Islanders and Alaskan Natives. Nominees shall be actively participating in farming in the county and shall be willing and able to serve as an advisor, if appointed. Please submit nominations by January 31, 2009.

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 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 Substance

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.

MILC SIGNUP UNDERWAY

Signup for the Milk Income Loss Contract Program (MILC) is underway and will continue through September 30, 2012. This program compensates dairy producers when domestic milk prices fall below a specified level.

FSA makes MILC payments on a monthly basis when the Boston Class I milk price falls below \$16.94 per hundredweight (cwt) as adjusted by the dairy feed ration adjustment. The monthly Boston price is posted online at:

http://www.fmmone.com/Northeast_Order_Prices/NE_Prices_main_new.htm#Advance

FSA determines the per hundredweight payment rate for the applicable month by subtracting the Boston Class I price for that month from the \$16.94 baseline price, and multiplying the difference by 45% during the period October 1, 2008 through August 31, 2012.

In addition, a "feed cost adjuster," is introduced over the life of the 2008 Act, which adjusts the \$16.94 per hundredweight (cwt.) benchmark price upward depending on the cost of feed rations.

The annual maximum eligible pound limit per dairy operation per fiscal year is 2,985,000 lbs from October 1, 2008 through August 31, 2012.

The 2008 Farm Bill made changes to the provisions for payment eligibility and adjusted gross income (AGI). If the individual or entity has non-farm AGI greater than \$500,000, the individual or entity is not eligible for MILC benefits.

Call for your appointment today.

LOAN REMINDERS

If you have an outstanding marketing assistance loan, make sure you continually monitor the storage structure to make sure it is secure and free of leaks **and** the commodity to make sure it is still in good condition.

If you need to move the commodity, or are planning to feed or sell some loan commodity, make sure you request authorization BEFORE you take any action.



We are no longer able to issue checks from this office. If you bring in a check for a loan repayment and there is a balance, we will not be able to issue you a refund check while you wait. These are now issued from U.S. Treasure.

SPOUSAL SIGNATURES

Husbands and wives may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and Commodity Credit Corporation programs in which either has an interest. This option is automatically available unless a written request for exclusion is made to the county office staff by either spouse. The exception to this is loans. Husbands and wives may not sign loan documents for each other, without a proper power of attorney form on file.



ADJUSTED GROSS INCOME CHANGES

The USDA announced changes to the Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) qualifications, which became effective in accordance with the 2008 Farm Bill.

The AGI limitation for commodity and disaster programs was reduced from \$2.5 million AGI from all sources, to a three-year average non-farm AGI of \$500,000. A person or entity will not be eligible for such programs, if the non-farm AGI exceeds \$500,000.

An individual or entity must also have a three-year average AGI less than or equal to \$750,000 per year from farm income in order to qualify for direct payments issued under the Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program.

The average nonfarm AGI limitation for conservation programs is \$1 million or less. However, an individual or entity who has non-farm AGI in excess of \$1 million remains eligible for conservation programs only, if 66.66% or more of the total AGI is derived from farming, ranching, and forestry operations. In addition, the AGI limitation for conservation programs may be waived on a case-by-case basis if it is determined that environmentally sensitive land of special significance would be protected.

PLEASE BE PREPARED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS ON YOUR ADJUSTED GROSS INCOME, WHEN YOU SIGN UP INTO FSA PROGRAMS.

NEW MAPS

Please review the boundaries on the new aerial photos that were mailed to you. If you believe they are incorrect, notify our office as soon as possible. These will be used for future farm program purposes, so they need to be as accurate as possible. Also notify us if you did not receive any maps that you think you should have.

TRANSFER OF FARM'S ADMINISTRATIVE COUNTY

A change in a farm's administrative county may be permitted to a contiguous county that currently has an FSA office, without completing a farm combination, if at least one of the following applies:

- the principal dwelling of the farm operator has changed
- a change has occurred in the operation of the land
- there has been a change that would cause the changed administrative county office to be more accessible
- the producer documents that the changed administrative county office is **significantly** more convenient.

Transfer shall be:

- signed by the farm operator and **all** owners
- a one-time option for the producer, if done because of convenience.

Transferring a farm can affect eligibility to vote in County Committee elections.

Schedule for 2009 County Committee Meetings

2009 County Committee meetings are scheduled to be held on the following dates, with meetings set to begin at 7:30 a.m. Regular session meetings are open to the public.

February 18, 2009	August 19, 2009
March 18, 2009	September 16, 2009
April 15, 2009	October 21, 2009
May 20, 2009	November 18, 2009
June 17, 2009	December 2, 2009
July 15, 2009	January 20, 2010

Congratulations!

Daniel Sharp was re-elected to the St. Joseph County FSA Committee as the COC member for Local Administrative Area # 3. Thank you to everyone who participated in the election process!



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
 AGRICULTURE
 ST JOSEPH COUNTY FARM SERVICE AGENCY
 693 EAST MAIN STREET
 CENTREVILLE, MICHIGAN 49032



PRESORTED STANDARD
 U.S. POSTAGE PAID
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 PERMIT NO. 19

WOOL AND MOHAIR DEADLINE

The final date to request a loan or LDP on wool or mohair harvested in 2008 is January 31, 2009.

REPORT ALL FARM CHANGES

Remember to report all farm changes to our office, including land purchases, land sales, death of landowner, change of owner, etc. We do not receive these updates from the courthouse.

Are you a spouse that owns land? Then notify our office, so you are able to participate in our elections and receive our mailings.

Non-Discrimination Statement

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs 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, audiotape, 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, S.W., Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Revised: 6/8/2005

Special accommodations will be made upon request for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment, or hearing impairment. If accommodations are required, please contact Sharon Hoch at 269-467-6336, EXT 2.