

January 2013



Wexford/Benzie/Missaukee/Osceola County FSA Updates

**Wexford/Benzie
Missaukee/Osceola
County
FSA Office**

7192 E. 34 Rd.
Cadillac, MI 49601

Phone: 231-775-7681
Fax: 231-775-0938

County Executive Director:
Travis Murray

Program Technicians:
Patty Salasky
Angie Case
Benita Meekhof

Farm Loan Manager:
Larry Cleary

County Committee Election Results

Congratulations to Bruce Eisenga and Eric Peterson! Bruce was re-elected to represent farmers from Missaukee County townships of Lake, Reeder, Richland and Riverside and Osceola County townships of Highland, Marion, Hartwick and Middle Branch on the county committee. Eric was re-elected to represent farmers in Wexford County. Each candidate ran unopposed.

FSA appreciates all of the voters for taking the time to complete the election ballot. The county committee system works only because of your participation.

The committee members held their organizational meeting and it was determined Bruce Eisenga will serve as the county committee chairman and Bob Morlock will serve as vice-chairman.

Farming Operation Changes

Producers who have bought or sold land, or added or dropped rented land from their operation must report those changes to the FSA office as soon as possible. A copy of the deed or recorded land contract for purchase property is needed to maintain accurate records with FSA. Failure to do so can lead to possible program ineligibility and penalties. While making record updates, be sure to update signature authorizations. Making record changes now will save time in the spring.

USDA URGES PRODUCERS TO COMPLETE AND RETURN THE 2012 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

The USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) mailed the 2012 Census of Agriculture during the last week of December and is asking for the help of farmers and ranchers in collecting accurate data.

The Census of Agriculture is only conducted once every five years and captures a count of all U.S. farms, ranches and those who operate them. Everyone who receives a Census form is required to return the Census form, even if they no longer farm or have never been involved in agriculture. Retired operators who own land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) or Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) are counted as farms and should complete the Census form.

Results of the Census are used by USDA, university research and extension, state and local officials, agribusinesses, farm organizations and commodity groups to make important policy and business decisions that impact people across the nation.

Please return the Census by February 4, 2013. Producers can also complete the Census online at www.agcensus.usda.gov after receiving the Census form through the mail. Information reported by producers is confidential. The results of the Census show the strength and diversity of U.S. agriculture.

Your answers to the Census can help grow your farm future, shape farm programs and boost services for you, your community and your industry.

For questions or help completing the Census, contact NASS at (888) 424-7828.

HIGHLY ERODIBLE LAND AND WETLAND COMPLIANCE

Landowners and operators are reminded that in order to receive payments from USDA, compliance with Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions is required. Farmers with HEL determined soils must apply tillage, crop residue, and rotation requirements as specified in their conservation plan.

Producers should notify FSA prior to conducting land clearing or drainage projects to insure compliance. If you intend to clear any trees to create new cropland, these areas will need to be reviewed to ensure any work will not jeopardize your eligibility for benefits.

Landowners and operators can complete form AD-1026 Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification to determine whether a referral to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is necessary.

HEL/WC compliance provisions do not expire with the farm bill and remain in effect. Anyone who converts a wetland for the purpose, or to have the effect, of making the production of an agricultural commodity possible shall be INELIGIBLE for specified USDA program benefits:

- during the crop year which is equal to the calendar year during which the violation occurred
- each subsequent crop year until the converted wetland is restored or mitigated before the beginning of such calendar year.

For more information on Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation provisions, contact your local FSA Office or visit the FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov/.

HISPANIC AND WOMEN FARMER AND RANCHER CLAIMS PERIOD

USDA has announced that Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers who allege discrimination by the USDA in past decades can file claims between Sept. 24, 2012 and March 25, 2013.

The process offers a voluntary alternative to litigation for each Hispanic or female farmer and rancher who can prove that USDA denied their applications for loan or loan servicing assistance for discriminatory reasons for certain time periods between 1981 and 2000.

As announced in February 2011, the voluntary claims process will make available at least \$1.33 billion for cash awards and tax relief payments, plus up to \$160 million in farm debt relief, to eligible Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers. There are no filing fees to participate in the program.

The department will continue reaching out to potential Hispanic and female claimants, around the country to get the word out to individuals who may be eligible for this program so they have the opportunity to participate.

Call center representatives can be reached at 1-888-508-4429. Claimants must register for a claims package (by calling the number or visiting the website) and the claims package will be mailed to claimants. All those interested in learning more or receiving information about the claims process and claims packages are encouraged to attend meetings in their communities about the claims process and contact the website or claims telephone number.

Website: www.farmerclaims.gov

Phone: 1-888-508-4429

Claims Period: Sept. 24, 2012 - March 25, 2013.

Independent legal services companies will administer the claims process and adjudicate the claims. Although there are no filing fees to participate and a lawyer is not required to participate in the claims process, people seeking legal advice may contact a lawyer or other legal services provider.

To read Secretary Tom Vilsack's news release click on the following link:

www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentid=2012/09/0309.xml&contentidonly=true

IRS 1099 CHANGES

In past years, IRS Form 1099-G was issued to show all program payments received from the Farm Service Agency, regardless of the amount. For calendar year 2012, the 1099-G reporting will change.

IRS Form 1099-G (Report of Payments to Producers) will only be issued to producers whose reportable payments total \$600 or more for the calendar year. Additionally, if the producer has at least \$600 in reportable payments received from multiple FSA offices, only one Form 1099-G will be issued. Producers subject to voluntary withholding or backup (involuntary) withholding will receive the appropriate IRS form, even if combined payments are less than \$600.

The same changes will apply to producers and vendors who normally receive IRS Form 1099-MISC from FSA.

Any producer who receives less than \$600 in combined payments should consult a tax advisor to determine if these payments must be reported on their tax return.

LDP'S FOR UNSHORN LAMB PELTS & WOOL

Applications for unshorn lamb pelts and wool LDP's (Loan Deficiency Payments) may now be accepted for crop year 2013.

If you wish to participate, you must submit form CCC-633 EZ (Loan Deficiency Payment and Request) page 1, before losing beneficial interest.

Eligible producers must have beneficial interest in the wool and pelts. Pertaining to the pelts, producers must have owned the lamb for at least 30 calendar days before the date of slaughter and sell the unshorn lamb for immediate slaughter.

Producers must also comply with wetland conservation and highly erodible land conservation provisions on all lands they operate or have interest in.

To qualify for payment, pelts must have been produced by an eligible producer from live unshorn lambs of domestic origin in the United States.

Note: As of January 1, to date, the LDP rate for LDP's for pelts & wool is \$0.00.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Stop 9410, Washington, DC 20250-9450, or call toll-free at (866) 632-9992 (English) or (800) 877-8339 (TDD) or (866) 377-8642 (English Federal-relay) or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish Federal-relay).