



FARM SERVICE AGENCY NEWSLETTER



U.S. Department of Agriculture

**Hunterdon Somerset
County FSA**
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Hours
Monday - Friday
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Office Staff:

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Executive Director
Elizabeth Banko-Program
Technician
Laura LaFevre-Program
Technician
Marilyn Barnes-Program
Technician (Temp)
County Committee:
Frank Hahola-Chair
Robert Fulper II-Vice Chair
John Drake-member
Edward Jablonski-member
Gerald Lyness-member
Cynthia Niciecki-minority
advisor

The Hunterdon
Somerset County
Committee meets the
third (3rd) Thursday of
the month at 8:30 AM.

The official newspapers
are the Hunterdon
Democrat and the
Courier.

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October 19, 2010

PAPER CHECK CONVERSION—OVER THE COUNTER (PCC-OTC)



Over the next year, FSA/ Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) is moving toward an electronic method for processing producers' checks. This will allow FSA/ CCC to process collections faster. When producers present checks, either in person or through the mail, the checks will be converted into an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). The funds will be debited from the producer's account, usually within twenty four (24) hours of receipt. Please see the U.S. Department of Treasury legal notices posted in the Service Center or visit the following U.S. Department of Treasury Internet site for detailed information: <https://www.pccote.gov/pccote/pcc/usingpcc/Legal%20Noticies/legalnotices.htm>.

Note: FSA/ CCC will begin this process in the coming months.

What is PCC-OTC?

PCC-OTC is a process for converting paper checks presented to FSA into electronic debits to the producer's bank account. It presents many benefits, such as reducing lost/misplaced checks and paper handling. This improves customer relations, speeds the check clearing process, and reduces the potential for human error.

How will my checks be handled?

If the check is presented in person, the check will be scanned into the system, voided, and stamped with the words, "Electronically Processed" or "Electronically Presented" and the voided check will be returned to the customer.

If the check is mailed to FSA, the check will be scanned into the system and voided. The customer will not receive the check back from FSA. FSA will hold checks for up to fourteen (14) calendar days to ensure the item was successfully processed, and then FSA will shred the check.

How quickly will funds be transferred from my account?

The transfer of funds from your account could occur within twenty four (24) hours. Therefore, you should be sure that you have sufficient funds in your account to process the transaction. If you do not have sufficient funds, we may initiate the transaction again.

How will this transaction appear on my account statement?

The transfer of funds will be reflected on your account statement. The transaction may be recorded in a different place on your statement than where your checks normally appear, such as under "other withdrawals" or "other transactions."

What are my rights if there is a problem with the transaction?

You have protections under Federal law for an unauthorized electronic fund transfer from your account. You should contact your financial institution immediately if you believe that the transaction reported on your account statement was not properly authorized or is otherwise incorrect.

COUNTY COMMITTEE ELECTIONS



Eligible voters in local administrative Area (LAA) 5 consisting of Hillsborough, Montgomery, and Franklin Townships in Somerset and Raritan Township in Hunterdon County will receive ballots in early November. The eligible nominees are John Drake and John Yablonosky. Ballots will need to be received by December 6, 2010 to be considered.

ACREAGE REPORTING



Filing an accurate, timely acreage report for all crops and land uses, including failed acres and prevented planting, is helpful in avoiding a loss of benefits. **The deadline to report small grains (wheat, oats, rye, barley) is May 31, 2011. To be considered timely filed, failed acreage must be reported before disposition of the crop.** If you have NAP coverage, the final date to report a specific crop is the earlier of the established reporting date or fifteen (15) calendar days before the onset of harvest or grazing of the specific crop acreage being reported. **Farms participating in DCP and those requesting LDP's and marketing assistance loans are required to report all cropland on the farm to be eligible for benefits. Please contact the office to schedule an appointment or for more information.**

PREVENTED PLANTING

Prevented planting can be reported on your acreage report. **To be considered timely reported, prevented planting must be reported within fifteen (15) calendar days after the final planting date for the crop.** When reporting prevented planting acreage, you must establish the crop was affected by a natural disaster rather than a management decision. In addition, you need to establish preliminary efforts were made to plant the crop. Preliminary efforts include orders for purchase, delivery of seed and fertilizer, disking the land, or financing documents. If you are reporting prevented planting acreage, please contact the office.

FARM RECORD CHANGES



Are you acquiring new parcels for the 2011 crop year or have the owners changed on your current parcels? **Verification proving you are the operator for 2011 may be needed for newly acquired parcels.** Documentation may include a written lease, rental agreement, or other document signed by the owner. Documentation needs to identify whether or not the owner shares in the risk of producing the crop and is entitled to share in the crop available for marketing from the farm or would share if the crop is produced; producer's name; owner's name and address; crop year; and farm and tract. **Reminder: Proof of ownership must be provided when owners have changed.** Documentation may include a copy of the deed; unrecorded deed; land contract; real estate tax statement; or township, block and lot identification. If you are no longer farming a parcel, a reconstitution may need to be completed. Please notify the county office to update your records today.

CONSERVATION RESERVE

ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (CREP)

CREP is a voluntary program that pays participants to implement conservation practices on environmentally sensitive land. Eligible practices include installing and maintaining grass waterways, contour grass strips, filter strips, and riparian buffers. Program participants receive annual rental payments, cost share assistance, and other financial incentives (i.e. signing incentives) for contracts of ten (10) to fifteen (15) years.

Eligible cropland must have been cropped four (4) of the six (6) years between 2002 and 2007 and be physically and legally capable of being cropped in a normal manner. Marginal pastureland is also eligible, but only for riparian buffers, and if the land is adjacent or parallel to streams. Participants remove cropland or marginal pastureland from agricultural production and convert the land to native grasses, trees, or other vegetation. Please contact the office for more information or to begin your application.

NEW JERSEY STATE ACRES FOR WILDLIFE ENHANCEMENT (SAFE)



SAFE practices provide the flexibility to meet the specific needs of high-value wildlife species in participating regions of New Jersey, including Hunterdon and Somerset Counties. Producers within the region can submit offers to voluntarily enroll acres in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts for ten (10) to fifteen (15) years, depending on the proposal authorized in the area. In exchange, participants receive annual CRP rental payments, incentives, and cost share assistance to establish habitat-enhancing natural covers on eligible land.

Eligible SAFE projects include wetland restoration; establishment of permanent introduced grasses and legumes; permanent wildlife habitat; wildlife food plots; rate and declining habitat; habitat buffers for upland birds; bottomland timber establishment on wetlands; shallow water areas for wildlife; establishment of permanent native grasses. Implementation of these practices will benefit threatened, endangered, and special concern wildlife species and migratory birds and waterfowl. SAFE targets the most environmentally sensitive land and establishes the highest value conservation practices on generally smaller acres. SAFE will continue until the enrollment goals have been met. For more information, please contact the office.

CONSERVATION COMPLIANCE

All USDA program participants are required to have a conservation system in place on all the highly erodible land (HEL) that they operate. Several areas where problems can arise with complying with a conservation system are renting new cropland; purchasing new land; breaking out additional cropland; planting different crops; and changing or removing existing conservation practices. It is important to contact the office before doing any of the above. Also, it is important that you contact the office before modifying-tiling, draining, dredging, filling, or leveling any wetland or drainage ditch. Failure to obtain advance approval for any of these situations can result in loss of all Federal payments and eligibility.

NON-INSURED CROP DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (NAP)

NAP was designed to reduce financial losses that occur when natural disasters cause a catastrophic loss of production or prevented planting of an eligible crop by providing coverage equivalent to catastrophic (CAT) insurance. Statute limits NAP to each commercial crop or agriculture commodity, except livestock, for which CAT is not available.

Producers with NAP coverage must remember to complete the following to qualify for benefits: 1) Timely file acreage reports; 2) Keep track of harvested production using applicable methods. (For example, bale weights or other means of determining quantities of hay are required); 3) File a "Notice of Loss" within fifteen (15) calendar days of when a loss is apparent, due to drought, hail, etc.

NAP coverage is \$250 per crop, not to exceed \$750 per county or \$1,875 for multiple county producers. Producers who had coverage on 2010 NAP crops may choose to continue coverage on the same crop or crops for 2011, if the applicable service fee is submitted by the application closing date. For more information on NAP coverage please contact the FSA office.

FARM STORAGE FACILITY LOANS (FSFL)

The Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program allows producers of eligible commodities to obtain low interest financing to build or upgrade farm storage and handling facilities. The new maximum principal amount of a loan through FSFL is \$500,000. Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) provides a loan for up to eighty five (85) percent of the net cost of the eligible storage facility and permanent drying and handling equipment. Loan terms of seven (7), ten (10), or twelve (12) years are available depending on the amount of the loan. Eligible commodities include: corn, grain sorghum, soybeans, oats, wheat, or barley harvested as whole grain; corn, grain sorghum, wheat, oats, or barley harvested as other than whole grain; hay; renewable biomass; fruits including nuts and vegetables.

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DATES TO REMEMBER

November 20, 2010—NAP sales closing date for 2011 apricots, blueberries, cane berries, cherries, grapes, honey, onions, pears, and plums

December 6, 2010—final date for LAA # 5 to submit their ballots for COC elections

December 31, 2010—NAP sales closing date for 2011 asparagus, beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, Cauliflower, greens, herbs, horseradish, leeks, lettuce, peas, potatoes, radishes, turnips

January 7, 2011—last day to apply for emergency loans under Presidential Disaster Declaration M1897

Continues: Sign up for continuous CRP, CREP, SAFE, FSFL

MARKETING ASSISTANCE LOANS

Marketing Assistance Loans are available. 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 requires compliance with the conservation and wetland protection requirements (AD-1026); beneficial interest requirements; complete acreage report; and ensuring that the commodity meets Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) grade and quality standards. For commodities to be eligible, the commodity must have been produced by an eligible producer, be in existence and in a storable condition, be merchantable for food, feed, or other uses as determined by CCC. The quality of the commodity in farm storage must be maintained through the term of the loan, nine (9) months.

The loan rates for 2010 are: Corn--\$2.17 per bushel; Sorghum--\$3.76 per hundredweight; Soybeans-- \$5.05 per bushel; barley--\$1.70 per bushel; oats--\$1.38 per bushel; wheat--\$1.88 per bushel; sunflower seed--\$6.95 per hundredweight. The interest rate for October is 1.25%. For more information or to apply for a marketing assistance loan, please contact the office.

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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 20250-9410, 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). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.”