



NEWSLETTER



Hancock County FSA Office

January 2012

7868 Co. Rd. 140
Suite C
Findlay, Ohio 45840

419-422-5438 phone
419-422-5105 fax

Hours

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

County Office Staff:

Casey Gunder
Diane Parke
Janis Wittenmyer
Sue Stahl
John Deeds, Reporter
Steve Inbody,
County Executive Dir.

Holly Gates,
Farm Loan Manager

NEXT County
Committee Meeting:
2/8/2012 @ 9:00am

Visit our Website at:
www.fsa.usda.gov/oh

County Committee Election Results

Congratulations to Michael Conley! Mr. Conley was elected to represent farmers from Amanda, Delaware, Jackson, Madison, Orange and Van-Buren townships on the county committee. Michael was elected to his second consecutive term. The election results for Local Administrative Area [1] are:

Michael Conley — Elected to the county committee (COC),

Steve Horton — 1st alternate to COC,

The committee members held their organizational immediately following the election process. Karen Conine was appointed Chairperson for the 2012 calendar year, with Richard Cupples and Michael Conley being appointed Vice-Chairperson and Member respectfully.

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.

LDPs for Wool and Unshorn Lamb Pelts

Eligible producers have until Jan. 31, 2012, to apply for Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP) for wool and unshorn pelts produced during the 2011 crop year.

Eligible producers must have beneficial interest in the wool and pelts, 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.

Faxed Signatures

Certain faxed signatures shall be accepted for all applicable program forms or other documents approved for faxed signatures, if all other signature requirements are met.

Applications for FSA Loans

Farmers that intend to apply to the Farm Service Agency for loan assistance for the upcoming crop year are encouraged to file their applications as early as possible. Filing early will help ensure that your loan is processed and approved as early as possible so that planting decisions can be made. Not applying early can result in a delay in processing loans due to the volume of applications that must be processed in date order. Contact your local FSA Loan Approval Official for more details and assistance in applying.

Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation 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 are required. Farmers with HEL determined soils are reminded of tillage, crop residue, and rotation requirements as specified per their conservation plan. Producers are to notify the USDA Farm Service Agency prior to conducting land clearing or drainage projects to insure compliance. Failure to obtain advance approval for any of these situations can result in the loss of eligibility and all Federal payments.

Appeal Process

After an FSA official makes a decision on your request for USDA services or application, you will be sent a letter informing you of the decision and options you can pursue if you disagree.

Generally, program participants have three choices — an informal review with the original agency decision-maker, an opportunity for mediation and finally an appeal to the next level of authority within the agency.



Financial Inquiries for FSA Producers

January signals the beginning of a new year, and a time to gather financial records and start thinking about filling out a 1040. Producers who have signed up for a USDA eAuthentication Level 2 account will be able to access their farm data through Financial Inquires for FSA Producers. The site is available under Online Services on the Ohio FSA webpage at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/oh>.

If you need to inquire about a particular electronic deposit, program payment, debt, or 1099G – USDA Level 2 customers can go here to view financial information.

Grasslands Reserve Program Sign-up Deadline Announced

The Ohio Farm Service Agency (FSA) is accepting applications for the 2012 Grassland Reserve Program (GRP). The deadline is **January 31, 2012** for applicants to submit offers for **GRP easement** and **GRP rental contracts**.

The GRP is a jointly administered program between FSA and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The purpose of GRP is to assist landowners and operators to protect grazing uses and related conservation values by conserving and restoring grassland resources on eligible private lands.

Eligible land includes privately owned grazing lands, land located in an area that historically has been dominated by grassland or savannas, or grassland that has the potential to serve as wildlife habitat of significant ecological value. Incidental lands may be included to allow for the efficient administration of a rental contract or easement.

Landowners and producers are encouraged to contact qualified personnel at their local USDA Service Center to assist in answering any questions on GRP or help in the application process.

Special Accommodations

Special accommodations will be made upon request for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment or hearing impairment. If accommodations are required, individuals should contact the county FSA office staff directly or by phone.

Hispanic and Women Farmers

A process to resolve the claims of Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers who believe they were discriminated against when seeking USDA farm loans has been established.

If you believe that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) improperly denied farm loan benefits to you between 1981 and 2000 because you are Hispanic, or because you are female, you may be eligible to apply for compensation.

For additional information on this and other settlement issues contact:

- **Hispanic and Women Farmer Claims Process:** www.farmerclaims.gov or call 1-888-508-4429
- **Pigford – The Black Farmers Discrimination Litigation:** www.blackfarmercase.com or call 1-866-950-5547
- **Keepseagle - The Native American Farmers Class Action Settlement:** www.IndianFarmClass.com or call 1-888-233-5506

Individuals interested in participating in the claims process may register to receive a claims package, or may obtain more information, by visiting the website or by calling the Farmer and Rancher Call Center. USDA cannot provide legal advice to potential claimants. Persons seeking legal advice may contact a lawyer or other legal services provider.

Pigford Settlement Claims Filing Period Open for African American Farmers and Ranchers

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack would like to remind African American farmers and ranchers that the period to file a claim in the Pigford II settlement has opened. African American farmers and ranchers who believe they are entitled to compensation under the Pigford II settlement must file a claim within 180 days in order to receive cash payment or loan forgiveness.

In February, USDA and Department of Justice announced an agreement with African American farmers to settle the Pigford II litigation for \$1.25 billion. Congress passed the Claims Resolution Act of 2010 that funded the settlement in November 2010, and the bill was signed by President Obama in December 2010.

The settlement arises from a class action lawsuit against USDA that alleges the Department discriminated against African-Americans who applied for or attempted to apply for farm loans or other farm benefits between January 1, 1981 and December 31, 1996. The settlement applies only to African-American farmers who meet specific eligibility requirements, including the requirement that they previously submitted a request to file a late claim in the 1999 Pigford I class action Consent Decree.

The filing period opened November 14, 2011, and continues for 180 days, until May 11, 2012.

Claimant services representatives can also be reached through calling 1-877-810-8110 or 1-866-950-5547. 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 a meeting and contact the website or claims telephone number.

The website is: www.blackfarmercase.com
 The call number is: 1-877-810-8110 or 1-866-950-5547
 Claims period: November 14, 2011 to May 11, 2012

2012 DCP/ACRE Sign-up

2012 Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP) and ACRE enrollment will begin Jan. 23, 2012 and will end June 1, 2012. Here are some IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

- All producers with an interest in a crop on **DCP base** acres must be identified on the DCP/ACRE contract and receive a proportionate share of DCP/ACRE payment for the farm.
- Changes on the farm after enrolling June 1st in DCP/ACRE **must** be reported to your local FSA office such as:
 - Ownership changes
 - Producer changes (Individuals and Entities)
 - Change in crop shares arrangements

Note: Changes cannot be made after Sept. 30, 2012.

Selected Interest Rates for January 2012	
90-Day Treasury Bill	0.125%
Farm Operating Loans — Direct	1.500%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct	3.500%
Limited Resource Loans	5.000%
Farm Ownership Loans —Down Payment	1.500%
Emergency Loans	3.750%
Farm Storage Facility Loan -- 7 year	1.375%
Farm Storage Facility Loan -- 10 year	2.000%
Farm Storage Facility Loan -- 12 year	2.250%
Sugar Storage Facility Loans	2.375%
Commodity Loans 1996-Present	1.125%

Farming Operation Changes

If you have bought or sold land, or if you have added or dropped rented land from your operation, make sure you report the changes to the office as soon as possible. You need to provide a copy of your deed or recorded land contract for purchased property. Failure to maintain accurate records with FSA on all land you have an interest in can lead to possible program ineligibility and penalties. Making the record changes now will save you time in the spring. Update signature authorization when changes in the operation occur. Producers are reminded to contact the office of a change in operations on a farm so that records can be kept current and accurate.

Power of Attorney

FSA has a required power of attorney form available for those who find it difficult to visit the county office personally because of work schedules, distance, health, etc., that enables the participant to designate another person to conduct his or her business at the office. This can be done by completing an FSA-211, Power of Attorney. The form is available at your local USDA Service Center or online at: http://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov/efcommon/eFileServices/Forms/FSA0211-0211A_081217V02.pdf.

Dates to Remember	
Jan. 1	Elected Committee Members and alternates take office.
Jan. 2	New Year's Day Holiday. FSA Offices Closed.
Jan. 16	Martin Luther King Jr. Day Holiday. FSA Offices Closed.
Jan. 23	Sign-up Begins for the 2012 DCP/ACRE Program.
Jan. 31	Deadline on 2011 LDPs for wool and unshorn lamb pelts.
Jan. 31	GRP sign-up deadline to submit 2012 applications.
Feb. 20	President's Day Holiday. FSA Offices Closed.
Mar. 15	Deadline to obtain 2012 NAP coverage on spring planted crops.
April 2	Final Availability for 2011 crop wheat, barley, oats, honey loans and LDPs.
Continues	Continuous Conservation Reserve program.

Visit our website at: www.fsa.usda.gov/oh

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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."