



# NEWSLETTER



Nov. 2012

## Pennsylvania FSA Office

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**Hours**  
Monday - Friday  
7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

## County Committee Voting Begins

Ballots for this year's county committee election will be mailed to eligible voters on Nov. 5, 2012. Voters must complete their ballots and return them to the Farm Service Agency county office by the close of business on Dec. 3, 2012. If mailed, ballots must be postmarked by midnight Dec. 3, 2012.

**Voter Requirements** -Persons meeting requirements in **1 or 2, plus 3**, below, is eligible to vote:

**1.** Be of legal voting age and have an interest in a farm or ranch as any of the following:

- An individual
- The authorized representative of an entity
- Both spouses when property is owned jointly
- Spouses in community property states.

**2.** Is not of legal voting age, but supervises and conducts the farming operations on an entire farm.

**3.** Participates or cooperates in any FSA program that is provided by law.

**Discrimination Prohibited** - No person shall be denied the right to vote because of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation or marital or family status.

## 2011 Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program Applications

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) will continue to accept SURE applications for 2011 crop losses through June 7, 2013. The SURE Program provides payments to producers when crop revenues are less than the crop guarantee. The SURE Program payment is equal to 60 percent of the difference between the crop guarantee and revenue.

To determine the guarantee and revenue for the SURE Program, all crops on all farms for a producer are included in the calculation. Payments under the SURE Program are limited to \$100,000.

To be eligible for the 2011 SURE Program, producers must have crop insurance on all insurable crops. For crops that are not covered by crop insurance such as pumpkins and cucumbers, producers must have purchased Non Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage at FSA. The Crop Insurance and NAP purchase requirement is waived for crops that are not economically significant to the farming operation. In addition, to be eligible the farming operation must either be located in a county which received a Secretarial Disaster Designation or have suffered at least a 50 percent loss of expected revenue and have at least one crop of economic significance with a 10 percent production loss.

For more information concerning the 2011 SURE program or other Farm Service Agency programs, contact your local FSA office or visit the Farm Service Agency website at [www.fsa.usda.gov/pas/](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pas/).

## **NAP Coverage Deadlines**

Noninsured Crop Disaster applications are due at different times according to the crop being insured. Producers should apply for Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage using form CCC-471 (Application for Coverage). Related service fees are due when the application is filed. The application and service fee **MUST** be filed by the crop sales closing date. Contact your local FSA office for the filing dates for your crops.

## **2013 Reporting of Fall Seeded Crops**

All producers are reminded that the acreage reporting date for fall-seeded small grains and perennial forage has changed. The new acreage reporting date is November 15 and includes all fall-seeded small grains, perennial forage, apiculture, PRF and forage seeding. Please call your local FSA County Office for more information and to set up an appointment.

## **Prevented Planting and Failed Acreage Claims**

To be considered timely, producers are reminded to request prevented planting acreage credit within 15 calendar days after the final planting date for the crop. The prevented crop acreage must be reported on a 2013 Report of Acreage and a Notice of Loss must be completed and submitted for county committee consideration. The inability to plant the crop must be due to a natural disaster and not due to a management decision.

Reports of failed acreage must be filed before disposition of the crop, and producers must be able to establish to the satisfaction of the county committee that the crop failed and was prevented from being replanted through the normal planting period because of natural disaster conditions.

Failure to timely file prevented planting and failed acreage claims can result in a loss of various program benefits.

## **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 your communities about the claims process and contact the website or claims telephone number.

**Website:** [www.farmerclaims.gov](http://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, persons seeking legal advice may contact a lawyer or other legal services provider.

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

<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usda/home?contentid=2012/09/0309.xml&contentidonly=true>

## Marketing Assistance Loans

Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL) continue to be available for producers who share in the risk of producing the 2012 crop. To be eligible, a producer must maintain continual beneficial interest in the crop from harvest through the earlier of the date the loan is repaid or CCC takes title to the commodity. Once beneficial interest in a commodity is lost, the commodity is ineligible for loan — even if the producer regains beneficial interest.

Commodity loan eligibility also requires compliance with conservation and wetland protection requirements; beneficial interest requirements, acreage reporting and ensuring that the commodity meets Commodity Credit Corporation minimum grade and quality standards. The quality of the commodity in farm storage must be maintained throughout the term of the loan.

Producers do not have to participate in the Direct and Counter-Cyclical and/or ACRE Programs to be eligible for commodity loans.

Violating provisions of a marketing assistance loan may result in liquidated damages, calling the loan and denial of future farm-stored loans.

## Unauthorized Disposition of Grain

If loan grain has been disposed of through feeding, selling or any other form of disposal without prior written authorization from the county office staff, it is considered unauthorized disposition. The financial penalties for unauthorized dispositions are severe and a producer's name will be placed on a loan violation list for a two-year period. Always call before you haul any grain under loan.

## Changing Banks

Almost all Farm Service Agency payments are made electronically using direct deposit.

To keep the system running smoothly, it's critical to keep the county office staff up to date on changes you might make in your financial institutions.

If you have changed accounts or institutions that might affect the direct deposit of your FSA payments, contact the FSA county office so we can update our files to insure continued uninterrupted service.

## FSA Signature Policy

Using the correct signature when doing business with FSA can save time and prevent a delay in program benefits. The following are FSA signature guidelines:

- Spouses may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and CCC programs in which either has an interest, unless written notification denying a spouse this authority has been provided to the county office
- Spouses shall not sign on behalf of each other as an authorized signatory for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations, or other similar entities

For additional clarification on proper signatures contact your local FSA office.

## CRP/Continuous CRP/CREP

As of the new fiscal year, which began October 1, 2012, FSA Offices must wait for National Conservation Authority to be re-instated, before they can process offers for enrollment or approve new contracts for any Conservation program. FSA will continue to pay all earned incentive payments, annual rental, and cost-share payments for all contracts approved **before** October 1, 2012. As soon as Congress reauthorizes the Conservation Programs, CREP signups will resume.

## Increased Guaranteed Loan Limit

The Farm Service Agency has announced that the loan limit for the Guaranteed Loan Program has increased to \$1,302,000. The limit is adjusted annually based on data compiled by the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

The lending limit increases every year according to an inflation index. The maximum combined guaranteed and direct farm loan indebtedness has increased to \$1,602,000.

As a reminder, the one-time loan origination fee charged on FSA guaranteed farm ownership and operating loans is 1.5 percent of the guaranteed portion of the loan.

Producers should contact their FSA County Offices with questions about farm loans.

## Rural Youth Loans

The Farm Service Agency makes loans to rural youths to establish and operate income-producing projects in connection with 4-H clubs, FFA and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is \$5000.

### Youth Loan Eligibility Requirements:

- Be a citizen of the United States (which includes Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) or a legal resident alien
- Be 10 years to 20 years of age
- Comply with FSA's general eligibility requirements
- Reside in a rural area, city or town with a population of 50,000 or fewer people
- Be unable to get a loan from other sources
- Conduct a modest income-producing project in a supervised program of work as outlined above
- Demonstrate capability of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. The project supervisor must recommend the project and the loan, along with providing adequate supervision.

Stop by the county office for help preparing and processing the application forms.

## Selling Land

If you plan on selling farmland, you should be aware of several consequences associated with FSA programs. For example, if you're planning to sell land that's enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program, the buyer must agree to continue the enrollment. If the buyer doesn't want to continue the CRP contract, you might have to refund all of the payments you've received to date. Reviewing program implications with your local Farm Service Agency staff before completing a sale of farmland is always a prudent precaution.

## Loans for the Socially Disadvantaged

FSA has a number of loan programs available to assist applicants to begin or continue in agriculture production. Loans are available for operating type loans and/or purchase or improve farms or ranches.

While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, the FSA has provided priority funding for members of socially disadvantaged groups.

A socially disadvantaged applicant is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of his or her identity as members of the group without regard to his or her individual qualities.

<b>Selected Interest Rates for November 2012</b>	
90-Day Treasury Bill	0.125%
Farm Operating - Direct	1.125%
Farm Ownership - Direct	3.125%
Limited Resource	5.00%
Farm Ownership - Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.50%
Emergency	2.215%
Farm Storage Facility – 7 year	1.125%
Farm Storage Facility – 10 year	1.2750%
Farm Storage Facility – 12 year	2.00%
Commodity Loans 1996-Present	1.125%

<b>Dates to Remember</b>	
Nov 5	County Committee ballots mailed
Nov 12	Veteran Day - Federal Holiday
Nov 15	Final reporting deadline for fall-seeded crops
Nov 22	Thanksgiving Day - Federal Holiday
Dec. 3	COC Ballots due to FSA Office
Dec 25	Christmas - Federal Holiday
Jan 1, 2013	New Year's Day - Federal Holiday
Jan 15, 2013	Final reporting deadline for apples, grapes, peaches, & pears
Jan 21, 2013	Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., - Federal Holiday
Mar 25, 2013	Hispanic and Women Farmer and Rancher Claims Period ends.
June 7, 2013	SURE applications due

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.