



South Carolina State FSA Newsletter



Volume 5, Issue 3

February, 2010



Laurie C. Lawson, State Executive Director, South Carolina Farm Service Agency

As we look forward to the spring of this year, 2010, I want to encourage all farmers and landowners to study the many programs that the Farm Service Agency has to offer. None of these programs fit every farm but I am sure that you, our customers, can pick out the ones that fit your farm. If you do not understand one or more of these programs, please come into the Farm Service Agency office in your locality and let our very competent staff explain the program or programs to you. Also, please pay particular attention to the block of dates on this front page and see which of these dates applies to you. Being late for a particular signup can cost you and we do not want you to lose any benefits that you are entitled to. We want the Farm Service Agency to be farmer friendly each and every day.

I would like to introduce to you the new South Carolina Farm Service Agency State Committee:

Robert Battle, Chairperson

Battle, of Nichols, South Carolina, has farmed for several years in the eastern part of the state. During the Clinton Administration, Battle served as chairman of the South Carolina FSA State Committee. In addition to his agricultural activities, Battle has significant community leadership experience.

English Dixon

Dixon, from Aynor, South Carolina, has spent his life farming in Horry County. In addition, he has previously served on the South Carolina FSA State Committee. Dixon is a respected leader in his community and participates in several local organizations.

Thomas J. Trantham

Trantham owns and operates a dairy in Pelzer, South Carolina. Trantham is known for his innovative feed production processes and has made significant contributions to conservation practices in the South Carolina dairy industry. His farm has been used in demonstrations on soil quality and erosion prevention projects.

Mary Frances Koon

Koon owns a farm in Orangeburg County. Koon is active in several community projects and organizations.

Don C. Sharp III

Sharp is a row crop farmer from southern South Carolina. He has worked for decades on behalf of the farmers of the State. He has previously served as the Chairperson of the Allendale County Committee and continues to be active in local and state farming operations.

I feel sure that these individuals will do a good job working with the South Carolina Farm Service Agency.

Office Closures

February 15, 2010	Offices Closed – Presidents Day
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Dates to Remember

February 28, 2010	NAP Application Closing Date
May 1, 2010 Also, final disposition date	Final Reporting Date for Fall Seeded Crops: Wheat, Barley, Oats, Rye, Triticale, Trees, and Fall Seeded Grasses
June 1, 2010	Final Reporting Date for Spring Planted Fruit and Vegetables, Production Reporting Date for Actual Production History (APH)
June 1, 2010	DCP Enrollment Deadline

NOTE: For spring and fall planted fruit and vegetable crops not planted by the final reporting date, the acreage must be reported by 15 calendar days after planting is completed.

NAP Production Reporting

Producers enrolled in the Non-insured Assistance Program (NAP) are required to provide production records for individual crops each year to establish an approved NAP yield. If this is the first year you participated in NAP, you can provide production and acreage information for this and from prior years to establish your yield. If you participated in NAP in previous years, you must report your production and acreage on a yearly basis to keep your yield up-to-date. It is recommended producers submit 2009 production records as soon as possible after harvest. All production records must be submitted by the subsequent crop year's final acreage reporting date.

NAP Coverage Deadlines

Producers in need of insurance coverage for Spring and Fall annually planted crops under the Noninsured Crop Assistance Program (NAP) have until **February 28th** to apply for the following crops for which the catastrophic level of Crop Insurance is not available:

Beans	Cantaloupes	Cucumbers
Eggplant	Forage Sorghum	Grain Sorghum
Honeydews	Okra	Peanuts
Field Peas	Peppers	Pumpkins
Squash	Sunflowers	Sweet Potatoes
Tomatoes	Watermelons	

The service fee is \$250 per crop per county or \$750 per producer per county. The fee cannot exceed a total of \$1875 per producer for individuals with farming interests in multiple counties. Limited resource producers may request a waiver for service fees.

To qualify, a producer must share in the risk of producing an eligible crop.

SURE

The Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE) provides benefits for farm revenue losses due to natural disasters that incurred in the crop years 2008 through September 30, 2011. To be eligible for SURE payments, a producer is required to obtain crop insurance on all crops in all counties or, if crop insurance is not available, to participate in the Non-Insured Assistance Program (NAP) except for grazed acreage. However, crop insurance or NAP coverage is no longer required for crops that are not of economic significance or those where the administrative fee required to buy NAP coverage exceeds 10% of the value of the coverage.

At least one crop of economic significance must suffer a 10% production loss due to an eligible disaster condition in order to determine the SURE guarantee and revenue for the farm. For the purposes of SURE, a farm is defined as "all crop acreage in all counties that a producer planted or intended to be planted for harvest for normal commercial sale or farm livestock feeding".

Eligible farmers and ranchers who meet the definition of Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, or Beginning Farmer or Rancher are exempt from the risk management purchase requirement.

The signup for 2008 losses officially began January 4, 2010. An ending signup date has not been announced.

Currently, FSA is offering the availability of the "interim process" for applying for SURE. This process will be available until the "full process" is implemented. Producers are **not** required to participate in or apply under the interim process to be eligible for the full SURE program.

During this "interim process", FSA personnel will manually calculate producer's information to determine eligibility for payments since software is not available. This is a slow cumbersome process due to the complexity of the SURE program. Please contact your local county office to schedule an appointment.

Program regulations are included in 7 CFR 760.600. The final rule was published on December 28, 2009.

Wetland Compliance

Producers renting or purchasing land that may have a converted wetland status need to check with the county office to learn if there are restrictions. The last thing FSA wants to do is to deny a producer benefits due to wetland noncompliance. The 1985 Farm Bill provides that, unless exempt, persons are ineligible for benefits under certain programs administered by USDA if they: plant an agricultural commodity on wetland that was converted after December 23, 1985 or convert a wetland after November 28, 1990. Following are permitted uses and restrictions of certain wetlands for compliance with Wetland compliance provisions:

- Wetlands can be farmed under natural conditions. However, wetlands cannot be converted.

- Wetlands converted before November 28, 1990, cannot be planted to an agricultural commodity and retain eligibility for benefits.
- Wetlands converted after November 28, 1990, must either be restored to wetland status or mitigated to regain eligibility for program benefits.
- Wetlands that can be farmed under natural conditions cannot be manipulated in any way, unless the Natural Resources Conservation Service determines the work would have a minimal effect on wetland values.
- Wetlands converted before December 23, 1985, can be farmed and maintained.

To avoid the possible loss of all USDA benefits it is strongly recommended that you check with NRCS before starting work in your fields or woodlands to convert a wetland to it make possible to plant a crop.

Conservation Reserve Program Reminders

- ✓ Thinning of CRP pines **must** be approved by the County Committee prior to thinning and must be thinned according to State Specifications.
- ✓ Clear-cutting CRP trees is a contract violation. If your CRP trees are damaged by root-rot, pine beetles or other disasters, immediately notify FSA.
- ✓ Pine straw cannot be harvested from CRP acreage.
- ✓ Producers are required to annually certify CRP acreage by July 15 of each year. Failure to certify may result in contract termination.
- ✓ If CRP land is sold, or if there is a death of a CRP participant, the new owner or estate representative must assume the CRP contract within 60 days or the contract will be terminated. If you are considering selling your CRP land, contact the FSA office so that they can advise you of the penalties that will apply if the new owners do not assume the contract.
- ✓ Management and maintenance activities are prescribed in the Conservation Plan and must be completed outside of the primary nesting season. The primary nesting season is April 1 through September 1. CRP contracts will be considered in non-compliance if required management and maintenance activities are not performed or performed during the primary nesting season. Carefully review and follow your conservation plan.

Farm Loan Programs

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers loans for farmers and ranchers to purchase farmland and finance agricultural operations. FSA loan programs are designed to help producers who are temporarily unable to obtain private or commercial credit. In many cases, applicants are beginning farmers who have insufficient net worth to qualify for financing through a commercial lender. In other instances, borrowers might have suffered setbacks from natural disasters or might be persons with limited resources.

Farm ownership loans or farm operating loans may be obtained as direct loans for a maximum of up to \$300,000. Guaranteed loans can reach a maximum indebtedness of \$1,112,000. Emergency loans are always direct loans for farmers who may have suffered physical or production losses in disaster areas designated by a Presidential or Secretarial disaster declaration. Rural Youth Loans, Loans to Beginning Farmers and loans for socially disadvantaged applicants are also available through FSA.

For details just contact the county office staff for an appointment with a farm loan officer.

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 Applicants.

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.

For purposes of this program, socially disadvantaged groups are women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders.

If producers or their spouses believe they would qualify as socially disadvantaged, they should contact their local FSA office for details. FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere.

2010 DCP Signup

Enrollment for the 2010 Direct and Counter-cyclical Program (DCP) has begun and will continue through June 1, 2010. USDA urges producers to make use of the eDCP automated website to sign up, or producers can visit any USDA Service Center to complete their 2010 DCP contract.

USDA computes DCP Program 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 2010, eligible producers may request advance direct payments based on 22 percent of the direct payment.

Land Changes

If you have bought, sold or are renting different land from the previous year, make sure you report the changes to the Farm Service Agency office as soon as possible after they occur. For farm ownership changes you will need to provide a recorded deed. Land owners may not timely report land sold that is included in a current FSA farm number that you may operate. This can affect you DCP/ACRE contract eligibility, Payment Limitation eligibility, as well as other FSA program activities. Please review your land leases to determine farmland you have leased as well as farmland you have given up from the previous year before visiting your local county office. It is up to the farm operator to review with FSA land changes before signing program contracts. Signing program contracts containing farmland you do not control could result in contract being terminated without benefits. Failure to maintain accurate records with FSA on all land you have an interest in can lead to possible program ineligibility and problems with Crop Insurance if FSA farm numbers and acreage reports, including producer shares, do not agree with Crop Insurance records.

Farm Operators Subleasing Cropland

All producers planting on **DCP base acres** must be identified on the DCP/ACRE contract and receive a proportionate share of DCP/ACRE payments for the farm. Producers, who enroll a farm in DCP/ACRE and at a later date sublease DCP cropland to another producer, **MUST** revise the DCP Contract to reflect the proportionate share of the additional producer. Failure to report the new producer and revise the DCP/ACRE contract shares is a contract violation which will result in contract termination and loss of payments for **all** producers on the farm. To avoid DCP/ACRE contract violations, such changes in producers on the farm after enrolling in DCP/ACRE **must** be reported to your local FSA office to determine if new producer is planting on base acres. This can be done at the time the new producer reports his planted acreage. The DCP/ACRE contract may be revised any time prior to September 30, 2010 (all necessary signatures must be obtained by September 30, 2010). Contracts may also be terminated upon written agreement of all producers receiving payment under the contract, provided any advanced payments are repaid with interest.

County Committee Election Results for 2010

<u>County Committee Election Results for 2010</u>	<u>Person Elected</u>
Abbeville/Greenwood/McCormick	Samuel A. Milford
Abbeville/Greenwood/McCormick LAA5	Daniel K. Warner
Aiken	Tristan A. DuBose
Allendale	Katie M. Gill
Anderson	Freddy C. Major
Bamberg	Walter C. Bessinger
Barnwell	Gene Rowell
Calhoun/Richland	Hayne Haigler
Calhoun/Richland LAA4	John E. Cotton
Charleston/Berkeley	Harry S. Dupress
Chester/Fairfield	Sandra Turner
Chester/Fairfield LAA4	Pauline F. McConnell
Chesterfield	Jerry W. Mills
Clarendon	Steve Gamble
Colleton	John E. Graham
Darlington	Thomas G. Chaplin
Dillon	Donald Keith Allen
Dorchester	Trent Pendarvis
Edgefield	Hamp E. Holmes, Jr.
Florence	Sybil B. Matthews
Georgetown	Martin L. Owens
Greenville/Pickens	Harold P. Welborn
Hampton	Jimmie Griner
Horry	Henry G. Bell, Jr
Jasper/Beaufort	Paul D. Sanders
Kershaw/Lancaster	Ralph B. Jones
Kershaw/Lancaster LAA4	Lynwood H. Horton
Laurens	Janet Lawson
Lee	Pete Beasley
Lexington	Joel R. Keisler
Marion	David Boyd Owens
Marlboro	Rhett M. Covington
Newberry	Heber Long
Oconee	Phillip L. Beardon
Orangeburg	Landy Weathers
Saluda	Leon Crouch
Spartanburg/Cherokee/Union	Terry R. McDowell
Sumter	Lee Newman
Williamsburg	Irwin McIntosh
York	Steven W. Boyd

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

VALUE ADDED PRODUCER GRANT (VAPG) PROGRAM

Rural Development (RD), a sister USDA agency, has grants available for producers of value added agricultural products. The purpose of these grants is to help eligible producers of agricultural commodities develop strategies to create marketing opportunities for their value-added agricultural products and/or to help develop business plans for viable marketing opportunities regarding the production of bio-based products from agricultural commodities.

A value-added agricultural product is any agricultural commodity or product that i) has undergone a change in physical state; ii) was produced in a manner that enhances the value of the agricultural commodity or product; iii) is physically segregated in a manner that results in the enhancement of the value of the agricultural commodity or product; iv) is a source of farm/ranch-based renewable energy, including E-85 fuel; or v) is aggregated and marketed as a locally-produced agricultural food product.

Applicants must qualify as independent producers, farmer or rancher cooperative, agricultural producer group, or a majority-controlled producer-based business venture. Priority will be given to applications from Beginning Farmers/Ranchers, Socially Disadvantaged Farmers/Ranchers or an operator of a Small or Medium-Sized Farm/Ranch that is structured as a Family Farm.

Grants can be up to \$300,000 for working capital and \$100,000 to develop business marketing plans.

Contact the nearest Rural Development office to apply for financial assistance through this program.

FEBRUARY INTEREST RATES

Farm Operating	2.625%
Farm Operating – Limited Resource	5.000%
Farm Ownership	4.875%
Farm Ownership – Limited Resource	5.000%
Farm Ownership – Beginning Farmer	1.500%
Down Payment	
Emergency – Actual Loss	3.750%

Marketing assistance loans are available for producers who share in the risk of producing the crop. Also, farm storage facility loans are available to build or upgrade farm storage and handling facilities. Interested producers may contact their local FSA office.

Please visit our website at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/sc>

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The SC State FSA Newsletter is published and distributed by the SC State FSA Office at 1927 Thurmond Mall, Suite 100, Columbia, SC 29201-2375.