



February 2010

Orleans County News

Farm Service Agency
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Hours
Monday - Friday
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

County Committee
Scott Birch, Chair
Doug Lawson, Vice Chair
Donna Hammond, Voting Member
Donna Hammond, Minority Advisor

COC meets 2nd Wednesday of each month.

NRCS District
Dayna Cole, Dist Mgr X18
Sarah Damsell, ARS X20
Dee Nault
Paul Daniels, Chair
Bill Lawson, Vice Chair
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Laurie Locke, PT X16
Brock Columbia, PT X26



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.

E-Mail Newsletter

In an effort to trim postage costs, we would like to send as many email newsletters as possible. If you are interested, please provide your email address so that we may add you to our growing list. Send to William.putnam@vt.usda.gov

Help Available to Stressed Farmers

In the past year, the economy, inclement weather, drought and other factors have hurt many farming operations around the country. These events pushed some farmers to the emotional breaking point. Watching their livelihood being threatened is difficult for farmers and ranchers and especially for those who care about them.

The National Suicide Prevention Hotline is available to help. If you know a farmer or rancher who is under stress and is reluctant to ask for help, or if you just need to talk to someone, call 1-800-273-TALK (8255). Your call will be routed to the crisis center nearest you, where trained staffers are available 24/7. This nationwide service is free and confidential. Help is just a phone call away.

For more information, go to <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>. This service is not affiliated with the US Department of Agriculture.

Direct and Counter-Cyclical Payment (DCP) program Sign-Up Underway

Signup has started for the 2010 Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment (DCP) Program for farms with base acres. You can sign up online or at local USDA service centers. Signup will continue until June 1, 2010. The June 1, 2010 deadline is mandatory for all participants. FSA will not accept any late-filed applications.

The electronic DCP (or eDCP) service will save you time, reduce paperwork and speed up contract processing at FSA offices. It is available to anyone eligible to participate in the DCP Program and can be accessed at www.fsa.usda.gov/dcp. To access this on-line service, you must have an active USDA eAuthentication Level 2 account, which requires filling out an online registration form at <http://www.eauth.egov.usda.gov> followed by a visit to the local USDA Service Center for identity verification.

FSA 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, you may request to receive advance direct payments based on 22 percent of the direct payment for each commodity associated with the farm. FSA will issue advance direct payments later this month. Counter-cyclical payment rates vary depending on market prices and are issued only when the effective price for a commodity is statutorily set below its target price.

Producers who are eligible for the DCP Program will also be eligible to enroll in the Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) Program. The enrollment period for the ACRE Program will begin in the spring. You may first enroll in the DCP Program, receive advance direct payments and then later modify your enrollment to include the ACRE program or you may wait and elect to enroll in DCP and ACRE at the same time in Spring 2010.

Controlled Substance

Any person who is convicted under federal or state law of a controlled substance violation could be ineligible for USDA payments or benefits. Violations include planting, harvesting or growing a prohibited plant. Prohibited plants include marijuana, opium, poppies and other drug producing plants.

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.

SURE

The Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE) provides benefits for farm revenue losses due to natural disaster that occurred 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.

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 following are the conditions that trigger SURE payments:

- at least one crop of economic significance must suffer a 10% production loss due to an eligible disaster condition
- crop of economic significance is a crop that has contributed or would have contributed at least 5% or more of the total expected revenue from all crops on the farm
- producers in counties declared disaster counties by the Secretary of Agriculture, or in contiguous counties, or those who show proof of an individual loss of at least 50% are eligible to receive SURE payments for crop producer or crop quality losses. Losses are measured with consideration to the whole-farm revenue, which includes crop insurance indemnities and commodity program payments, so that producers are not paid more than once for the same loss.

A SURE calculator is available at:

http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/sure_calculator_2008.xls. The calculator is not official, but is intended for educational use. A fact sheet and background information are also available online.

Applications for FSA Loans

Farmers and ranchers 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. Failure to apply 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 farm loan manager or officer for more details and assistance in applying.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its program and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Attention Producers, Landowners!

**Do you intend to clear timber areas to create or to expand existing crop areas? *Are you converting a pasture field into a crop field?
*Are there any areas on your farm(s) that you are considering cropping that have not been cropped in recent years? *Is there a wet spot in a field that you want to drain to make cropping easier? *Are you disturbing a wildlife habitat area of any type?
These are Highly Erodible and Wetlands provision questions that need to be considered each year by producers to assure that they may remain eligible for USDA benefits. Please contact FSA and NRCS representatives before you begin.*

ARC Loans Through SBA

Section 506 of the Recovery Act authorized the Small Business Administration (SBA) to help viable small businesses make payments on existing debt. The ARC loan program is designed to give viable small businesses facing immediate financial hardship some temporary financial relief so that they can keep operating and get their cash flow back on track. **The SBA is now reaching out to farmers in Vermont** with this loan program that is available until September 30, 2010, or until the appropriate funds run out, whichever comes first.

- An ARC loan is up to \$35,000
- ARC loans will be disbursed during the first six months followed by a 12 month period of no repayment by the borrower, followed by a repayment period of five years.
- 100% guaranteed backed by the SBA
- Proceeds may be used to repay mortgages, secured and unsecured loans, lines of credit, credit cards and other accounts payables.
- No collateral required
- Eligible SBA lenders can participate.

This is another source of credit for borrowers, farmers that may be near the FSA limits. Further information can be found at <http://www.sba.gov/recovery>. The local SBA office in Montpelier can be reached at 1-802-828-4422.

Foreign Buyers Notification

The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) requires all foreign owners of U.S. agricultural land to report their holdings to the Secretary of Agriculture. The Farm Service Agency administers this program for USDA. Foreign persons who have purchased or sold agricultural land in the county are required to report the transaction to FSA within 90 days of the closing. Failure to submit the AFIDA form could result in civil penalties of up to 25 percent of the fair market value of the property. County government offices, Realtors, attorneys and others involved in real estate transactions are reminded to notify foreign investors of these reporting requirements.

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. Records submitted must be reliable and verifiable. Records need to show crop disposition. 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.

Power of Attorney

For those who find it difficult to visit the county office personally because of work schedules, distance, health, etc., FSA has a power of attorney form available that enables you to designate another person to conduct your business at the office. If you are interested, please contact our office or any Farm Service Agency office near you for more information.

Bank Account Changes

Current policy mandates that FSA payments be electronically transferred into your bank account. In order for timely payments to be made, producers need to notify the FSA county office if your account has been changed or if another financial institution purchases your bank. Payments can be delayed if the FSA office is not aware of updates to your account and routing numbers.

AGI Compliance and IRS Data-Sharing

Compliance with average AGI limitations is an eligibility requirement to receive program payments and benefits administered by FSA and NRCS. A review and verification of AGI compliance certifications submitted by program participants is required to ensure the accuracy of payments and the integrity of these programs. FSA and IRS have finalized a data-sharing process whereby IRS will report results to FSA on a regular basis. No financial information will be provided to FSA; only verification that AGI has not exceeded certain parameters. This process begins with participants providing consent to IRS for the use and disclosure of tax information to FSA for AGI compliance purposes. **It is imperative that all producers complete and provide IRS with either form CCC-927 for individuals or form CCC-928 for legal entities. In order to ensure no interruption of FSA payments that you are entitled to receive, please pick up one of these forms and submit it to the IRS. The deadline for this process is June 15, 2010. FSA will provide the forms, available at the office; but the submission is your responsibility. Don't Delay. Continuation to receive FSA payments is at stake.**