



NEWSLETTER



November 2012

Benton County FSA

Agricultural Service Center
415 Wine Country Rd
Prosser, WA 99350
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Office Hours

Mon.-Fri. - 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM

County Committee

Carl Anderson – Chairman
David Roseberry – Vice Chairman
Jeff Freepons – Member
Teresa Engbretson – COC Advisor
Ernie Lara – COC Advisor

Farm Program Staff

Dennis Simmelink, CED Ext: 102
dennis.simmelink@wa.usda.gov
Bonnie Anderson, PT Ext: 100
Teresa Johnson, PT Ext: 107

Farm Loan Staff

Pasco, WA (509) 545-5843
Joyce Nevins-Ginsberg, SFLO ext.105
Beth Farias, FLT ext. 108

FSA Web sites

State:
<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/wa>

National:
<http://www.fsa.usda.gov>

Next COC Meeting

December 5, 2012 @ 9:00 AM

Dates to Remember

Nov. 12 Veterans Day Observed
(Office closed).

Dec. 3 Final date to submit COC
Ballots to County Office

More Information may be found at

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/wa>

2013 COUNTY COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

The nomination period for County Committee elections has closed, and we are pleased to announce the following persons that have been nominated to serve as representative of Local Administrative Area (LAA) 3 on the Benton County FSA Committee for the upcoming three year term which begins January 1, 2013:

Carl Anderson - Carl and spouse Stephanie raise dryland wheat and cattle, and participate in the Conservation Reserve Program in various areas of the county.

Susan Abken - Sue and spouse Harvey participate in the Conservation Reserve Program on their farm south of Kennewick.

LAA #3 is located in the south eastern portion of the county and includes all land lying east of the Plymouth Highway from the Columbia river and heading north to Sellards Road; from there north on Badger Canyon Rd to Badger Road and heading west to State Route 225 to Benton City; from there north to Horn Rapids Road and east to the Columbia River. Person(s) with interests in more than one LAA have been designated to vote in the district in which the majority of their farming interests lie.

Ballots will be mailed to all eligible voters in early November with the final date for return or postmark of ballots being Monday, December 3, 2012. Ballots will be tabulated on Wednesday, December 5, 2012 at 10:00 a.m., during the regular County Committee meeting which starts at 9:00 a.m. at the Ag Service Center in Prosser. Regular session meetings including election processes are open to the public.

Current LAA 3 representative Carl Anderson is completing his first full term. Each term consists of 3 years with a maximum of 3 consecutive terms that can be served. We wish to extend our sincere appreciation to both Carl and Sue for their willingness to serve the farmers and ranchers in Benton County!

2011 SUPPLEMENTAL REVENUE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ANNOUNCED

Signup for the Supplemental Revenue Assistance (SURE) program opened October 22, 2012, and will continue through June 7, 2013. SURE covers weather related crop losses suffered during the 2011 crop year which ended September 30, 2011.

Eligible producers must either have suffered a minimum 10% production loss to one or more crops of economic significance, and be located within a county declared as a primary disaster county, or contiguous disaster county, as designated by the Secretary of Agriculture (*which includes Benton County*); or be an individual producer with losses of 50% or greater, regardless of county designation. SURE requires applicants to have carried Federal crop insurance and/or Noninsured Assistance Program (NAP) coverage on all crops of economic significance as a condition of eligibility. Socially disadvantaged, beginning farmers and ranchers, and limited resource farmers may be eligible for SURE without a policy or plan of insurance, or NAP coverage.

In order to apply for SURE, please contact our office to request an appointment.

2008 FARM BILL EXPIRATION – WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU?

Life goes on, although many programs offered through FSA cease to exist in their current form with the expiration of the 2008 farm bill on September 30, 2012. The following is the status on a few notable programs:

- Direct Counter-Cyclical Program and ACRE Program- authorization ended with the 2012 year. **ACRE participants are still required to provide 2012 production as a term of your ACRE contract, not later than 7/15/2013.**
- **2013 crop acreage reports are being accepted; CALL for an appointment for fall seeded crops prior to December 15.**
- Conservation Reserve Program - No continuous CRP enrollment including CREP/SAFE may be accepted until the program is reauthorized; current contracts, and activities associated with current contracts, such as cost-share requests, annual rental payments, and signup/practice incentive payments are still authorized to be issued as earned.
- Noninsured Assistance Program - NAP was authorized outside the 2008 farm bill legislation, and continues on. Applications for coverage may still be obtained through applicable sales closing dates, and indemnities on eligible claims may be paid. Adjusted Gross Income provisions are not applicable to 2013 NAP policies at present. REMINDER: the final date to purchase 2013 NAP policies for grapes and those perennial fruit crops not eligible for federal crop insurance is November 20, 2012.
- Market Assistance Loans for 2012 - Remain authorized through the end of the applicable loan availability period (1/31/2013 for wool and unshorn pelts; 3/31/13 for small grains, canola, and honey; and 5/31/13 for corn, dry peas and lentils).
- LIP/LFP/ELAP /TAP – Authorization for the Livestock Indemnity Program, Livestock Feed Program, Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program and the Tree Assistance Program ended September 30, 2011.
- Farm Service Agency Loan Programs - FSA is still accepting and processing direct operating, farm ownership, youth and emergency loans, and the loan guarantee programs between FSA and approved local lenders remain in effect. FSA is also accepting Farm Storage Facility Loan applications.
- MILC – The Milk Income Loss Contract Program ended with the 2008 Farm Bill on Sept. 30, 2012. FSA will make MILC payments for September production in November, if milk prices adjusted for feed prices trigger a MILC payment. To obtain MILC benefits for all previous months for which a MILC payment rate was in effect, you must provide final production evidence and any supporting documentation, if not already submitted, for eligible months by **November 1, 2012**.

2013 ACREAGE REPORTING CHANGES

Farm Service Agency and the Risk Management Agency have established joint acreage reporting dates; the changes will be effective beginning for the 2013 reporting year. Unfortunately, what that means is that FSA dates will now match the “earliest” acreage reporting date for insurable crops, rather than having one date for all crops in the county, which had previously been the case. The dates for Washington State for 2013 are as follows.

All fall planted wheat/small grains	12/15/2012	fall planted canola	12/15/2012
Mint	12/15/2012	fall planted onions	12/15/2012
Alfalfa seed	12/15/2012	Perennial fruits and grapes	01/15/2013
Spring planted crops	07/15/2013	CRP	07/15/2013
Perennial forages	07/15/2013 *		

* Perennial forage crops covered under a Noninsured Assistance Program (NAP) policy are required to be reported not later than 15 days after the beginning of harvest of the crop; for range policies within 15 days of the beginning of the NAP grazing season; for hayed crops, within 15 days of first cutting, as established by the County Committee.

Acreage reports accepted after the date(s) specified will be considered late filed, and subject to late filing provisions including a late filing fee. Due to the timing of announcing these changes, USDA has instituted a process to waive late filing fees in those instances where producers requested to file acreage timely but County office staff could not complete the request by the established deadline.

In order to be considered for waiver of the late filing fee, applicants must have contacted their local FSA office requesting to file an acreage report by the applicable deadline, and have been placed on a register to accept the filing when FSA staff is available. All producers with winter wheat or other crops with a 12/15 reporting deadline are encouraged to contact our office to request an appointment, not later than December 15, 2012. We will prioritize those with winter endorsement policies (required by 12/15 to your agent as well), and will create a schedule for remaining producers contacting us by the deadline, to be considered timely filed.

CRP CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS

Significant CRP enrollment activity in the past two signup periods coupled enrollment or re-enrollment in the Continuous CRP programs means there is no one size fits all answer to the question "What do I need to do on my CRP contract?" However, here are the answers to a few frequently asked questions to guide you.

Am I required to seed this overwinter period? Most plans call for seeding after one year of fallow; so, if you were enhancing grassland accepted in Signup 41, or offered new land in Signup 43, you are likely scheduled to seed this overwinter period. If in doubt, check your plan, or call our office.

When can I start seeding? NRCS recommends fall dormant seeding only after soil temperatures drop below 42 degrees; typically early November, after an application of nonselective herbicide for cheat grass control, if adequate moisture has occurred to germinate weed seed. The final cutoff for seeding in the central basin is around February 15, with the cutoff date slightly later as you move to the higher precipitation areas. If you are scheduled to seed this fall, please contact NRCS/FSA prior to seeding for updates on beginning dates.

What about high seed costs? It is "reported" to be very high; cost-share will cover 50% of costs up to a per acre expense of \$85 per acre on native mixtures. If you cannot obtain seed, or have significant acreage to seed and the cost of seed would provide an economic hardship, provisions allow for you to request a one year extension to complete seeding, so long as you have completed the activity within 24 months of contract approval. These requests are acted on by the County Committee on a case-by-case basis, potentially requiring establishment of a temporary cover if fallow will be maintained for an additional year.

The NRCS field inspection reported my stand as "deferred"; what does that mean? In certain instances, certification of the density (plants per square foot), diversity (types of plants that could be identified), or in some cases both were deferred by the field inspection until next year. In those instances, the site will be revisited in 2013 to make a final determination on the adequacy of your stand. The field technician should have made suggestions on activities that would improve your chances of having the grass meet certification. These may include harrowing, spot or whole field weed control, or limited inter-seeding of weak areas. Please implement the suggested activities this fall/winter/next spring, as appropriate to give yourself the best chance of passing your next inspection. Stands deferred during this inspection period will be given a final assessment early next spring, and if failed, will need to develop a plan to seed in the winter of 13-14' to remain in compliance. If you have a question on what you should be doing, ASK! Deferring the assessment of your grass for one season was done in order to give time for questionable stands to be improved, but will only potentially work if you actually follow through with the recommended activities.

When can I turn in my cost-share materials? We try to pay cost share after the completion of all of the required activity for seeding; this generally means your request will contain the seedbed preparation activity, the seeding operation and cost of seed on one application, once the seeding is complete. Post plant weed control cost share, and wildlife watering facilities typically come in a separate request. Please be prepared to list the seedbed preparation activities you undertook, provide invoices for any custom work, and any herbicides applied, and bring in seed tags with pertinent data on purity, germination, and seed types involved in the mixture, along with the total pounds of seed used, and in the event you did not apply all the seed, how much is left over.

IRS 1099 CHANGES

Calendar year 2012 has brought changes to the way FSA reports farm program payments to the producer and to the IRS. In past years, IRS Form 1099-G would be issued to show all program payments received from FSA, regardless of the amount. Starting with calendar year 2012, producers whose total reportable payments FSA are less than \$600 will not receive IRS Form 1099-G. Also, producers who receive payments from more than one county will only receive one Form 1099-G if the total of all payments from all counties is \$600 or more. The same changes will apply to producers and vendors who normally receive IRS Form 1099-MISC from FSA.

FSA ADOPTS NEW CHECK PROCESSING METHOD

Producers who make payments by check to the Farm Service Agency can expect to see a change soon in how those checks are processed. FSA is adopting an electronic method for processing check payments from customers; using the electronic method, if you submit a paper check payment, either in person or through the mail, the check will be converted into an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) using Over the Counter Channel (OTCnet), a web-based application.

It is important for you to have sufficient funds in your bank account because the electronic transfer of funds could occur within 24 hours. FSA will hold the paper check for up to 14 calendar days to ensure that the transaction was successfully processed and then the check will be shredded. You will not receive the paper check back from FSA.

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." 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.

The agency is implementing the new system to reduce the possibility of losing or misplacing checks, speed up the check clearing process and to reduce the potential for human error. For more information regarding electronic check processing, contact the county FSA office or see the U.S. Department of Treasury Internet site <http://fms.treas.gov/otcnet/legal.html>.

SECRETARY ANNOUNCES HISPANIC AND WOMEN FARMER AND RANCHER CLAIMS PERIOD NOW OPEN

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced a claim process open to Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers who allege discrimination by the USDA between 1981 and 2000 due to denial of application for loan or loan servicing assistance. The claim period began September 24, 2012, and will continue through March 25, 2013. 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 claimants. There are no filing fees to participate in the program.

Information related to applying for consideration under the claim process may be obtained by calling 1-888-508-4429 or on the web at www.farmerclaims.gov. Claimants must register for a claims package (by calling the number or visiting the website) and the claims package will be mailed to claimants. 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. Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in this meeting should contact the Farm Service Agency at (509) 323-3000 or Federal Relay Service at 1-866-377-8642 ten days prior to the meeting.

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 provided.

FISCAL YEAR 2012 FINAL PROGRAM PAYMENTS

We have been busily issuing 2012 Conservation Reserve Program and 2012 Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program payments since the first part of October and have nearly completed them with the exception of a few problem payments. Once again these payments are being deposited directly into producers' bank accounts.

As mentioned, these payments have not been processed without their share of problems. If you feel that somehow we have missed one of your payments or if the payment is smaller/larger than it should have been, please contact us and we will do our best to resolve the issue along with your concerns.