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Harney County FSA Updates

Harney County FSA Office

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Next County Committee Meeting: August 20 at 1:00pm

Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) Sign-up

A lack of moisture, over an extended period of time, has caused producers in Harney County to suffer from the effects of severe drought conditions. Farms experiencing severe drought conditions may be eligible for cost-share assistance under the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP). This disaster program is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency (FSA), which provides cost-share assistance if the damage is so severe that water available for livestock has been reduced below normal to the extent that the livestock cannot survive without additional water. Only those farms or ranches that had adequate livestock watering systems or facilities before the drought are eligible for cost-share assistance.

A producer qualifying for ECP assistance may receive cost-shares not to exceed 50% of the cost of installing eligible temporary measures or 75% of the cost of installing eligible permanent measures. Cost-share assistance is limited to \$ 200,000 per person per natural disaster—producer must have sustained an estimated minimum of \$ 1,000 in damages to qualify for the program. Approved practices and measures include:

- Installing pipelines, troughs and tanks for livestock water
- Constructing or deepening wells for livestock water
- Developing springs or seeps for livestock water

Cost-share assistance under this program will be limited to expenses incurred after April 28, 2014. The sign-up period for this program will be from July 14th, 2014 through August 26th, 2014.

To obtain additional program information or to schedule an appointment to file a cost-share application contact the Harney County FSA Office at (541) 573-6446 Ext 2.

USDA Announces Funding Availability For Turning Biomass Material Into Energy

Farm Bill Implementation Continues as Energy Facilities Can Now Apply for Renewed Biomass Crop Assistance Program.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will begin accepting applications June 16 from energy facilities interested in receiving forest or agricultural residues to generate clean energy. The support comes through the Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP), which was authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill.

BCAP provides financial assistance to farmers and ranchers who establish and maintain new crops of energy biomass, or who harvest and deliver forest or agricultural residues to a qualifying energy facility. Of the total \$25 million per year authorized for BCAP, the 2014 Farm Bill provides up to 50 percent (\$12.5 million) each year for matching payments for the harvest and transportation of biomass residues. BCAP matching payments will resume this summer, while crop incentives will begin in 2015. Some matching payments will support the removal of dead or diseased trees from National Forests and Bureau of Land Management public lands. This will be turned into renewable energy while reducing the risk of forest fire. Agriculture residues, such as corn cobs and stalks, also may qualify as energy-producing feedstock.

With the 2014 Farm Bill requiring several regulatory updates to BCAP, the resumption of payments for starting and maintaining new sources of biomass (Project Areas) has been deferred until a later date when the regulatory updates occur.

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), which administers BCAP, will begin accepting applications from biomass conversion facilities beginning June 16, 2014, through July 14, 2014. Information on funding availability can be found in the Federal Register notice at <http://go.usa.gov/8FSH>. For more details on applications and deadlines on BCAP, visit a local FSA county office or go online to www.fsa.usda.gov/bcap.

Filing For NAP Losses

The CCC-576, Notice of Loss, is used to report failed acreage and prevented planting and may be completed by any producer with an interest in the crop. Timely filing a Notice of Loss is required for all crops including grasses. For losses on crops covered by the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) and crop

insurance, you must file a CCC-576, Notice of Loss, in the FSA County Office within 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent.

If filing for prevented planting, an acreage report and CCC-576 must be filed within 15 calendar days of the final planting date for the crop.

Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Compliance

Landowners and operators are reminded that in order to receive payments from USDA, they must be compliant with Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions. Farmers with HEL determined soils must apply tillage, crop residue and rotation requirements as specified in their conservation plan.

Producers should notify FSA prior to conducting land clearing or drainage projects to ensure compliance. If you intend to clear any trees to create new cropland, these areas will need to be reviewed to ensure any work will not jeopardize your eligibility for benefits.

Landowners and operators can complete form AD-1026 Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification to determine whether a referral to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is necessary.

For more information on Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation provisions, contact a FSA County Office or visit the FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov.

Beginning Farmer Loans

FSA assists beginning farmers to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:

- Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years
- Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm
- Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA
- Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's average size farm.

Additional program information, loan applications, and other materials are available at your local USDA Service Center. You may also visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

Youth Loans

The Farm Service Agency makes loans to youth to establish and operate agricultural 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
- 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 youth loan applicant, along with providing adequate supervision.

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

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).