

USDA Service Center
177 N. Imperial Avenue
El Centro, CA 92243
Telephone:
(760) 352-3531 ext. 2
Fax: (760) 352-0219

Web Sites:

FSA: www.fsa.usda.gov
USDA: www.usda.gov

Hours:

Monday-Friday
8:00 AM-4:30 PM

County Committee:

Curt Corda, Chair
Gary Mamer, Vice-Chair
Mike Palmer, Reg. Mbr.

Advisor-

Raul Rodriguez, Jr.

County Director:

Rosalinda Singh

Farm Loan Manager:

Tom Hunton
(661) 336-0967 ext. 2

Staff:

Chris Armendariz
Carmen Perez
Julia Contreras
Rogelio Araujo

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March 2007

Imperial County

FSA NEWS

Chris Armendariz Retiring

It is with very mixed emotions that we announce the upcoming retirement of long-time employee Chris Armendariz. Chris began her employment with FSA in 1983, and has always been very supportive of the farm community. Her dedication shows in the wonderful working relationships she has developed with her co-workers and clientele. We are terribly sad to see her go, but realize a whole new life and new endeavors are waiting for her, and we wish her the absolute best in life. Whatever her future plans, those new associates will realize what a gem she is, and will definitely benefit from her contributions. Chris has asked the following statement be included in this newsletter:

“Farewell....I arrived in the Imperial Valley from San Diego in 1982 and in February 1983 started working for the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS), now Farm Service Agency. It is with a heavy heart that I have decided to say goodbye and leave the agency. I have worked through many Farm Bills, seen many changes, good times as well as hard times and I hope that through it all you know I had your best interests and concerns in mind. My goal was to always be efficient and friendly, and to treat you professionally. I hope I conveyed that to all of you over these 20+ years. I know at times with changes in programs, procedures and policies it has been very frustrating, and as much as you were frustrated, the frustration intensified in the office. It has always been with pride and self esteem to deliver the programs as easily as possible, for all of you to comply with, and understand. Now I would like to take this opportunity to say that it has been a pleasure as well as a privilege to work for all of you and I cherish the friendships I have made along the way. So I tip my cap (John Deere) to all of you and my co-workers, it's been a wonderful career and I thank you all!”

Chris, we will say so long, but never good-bye. Every day we will truly miss your smiling face, your wonderful sense of humor, your absolute devotion to your job and especially your friendship. It has been an honor and privilege to work with you, and you can never be replaced.

TO ALL NEWSLETTER READERS:

**PLEASE JOIN US IN SHOWING OUR APPRECIATION
TO CHRIS FOR HER YEARS OF
DEDICATION AND SERVICE TO US ALL.
AN INFORMAL RECEPTION WILL TAKE PLACE
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 28TH, 1:30-3:30 PM
HERE AT THE USDA SERVICE CENTER.**

Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs)

LDP's are payments made to producers who, although eligible to obtain a marketing assistance loan, agree to forgo the loan in return for a payment on an eligible commodity. The CCC-633EZ form has been developed to encompass field direct LDP's; basic LDP's and cotton AA and replaces the original CCC-633 and CCC-709 forms.

By completing and agreeing to the terms and conditions provided on CCC-633EZ page 1 BEFORE losing Beneficial Interest (BI), producers indicate their intentions to receive LDP benefits. This one page covers all counties and all eligible harvested commodities for the entire year for the individual, joint operation or entity identified on the form. *Producers must sign & submit this form to FSA before BI in the crop is lost.* Once CCC-633EZ page 1 has been signed & submitted, the producer can submit an LDP request by completing page 2 (all harvested commodities except cotton); page 3 (cotton); or page 4 (wool, mohair, unshorn pelts) at any time during the loan availability period. Eligible commodities and final loan availability:

Commodity	Final Loan Availability Date	
	For 2006 Crops	For 2007 Crops
Wool, mohair, unshorn pelts	January 31, 2007	January 31, 2008
Wheat, honey, barley, canola, oats, crambe, flaxseed, rapeseed, sesame	March 31, 2007	March 31, 2008
Cotton, corn, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard, safflower, sunflower seed	May 31, 2007	May 31, 2008

HEL/WC Compliance

Operators are reminded that in order to receive payments, compliance with Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions are required. Farmers with HEL soils need to be aware of tillage, crop residue, and rotation requirements as specified in your conservation plan. Contact NRCS if you have any questions about your conservation plan. Don't wait until after you plowed the ground to find out if you are out of compliance. Also, it is very important that you contact this office before modifying (tiling, draining, dredging, filling or leveling) any wetland or drainage ditch. Failure to obtain advance approval for any of these situations can result in loss of all Federal payments and eligibility.

SPOUSAL SIGNATURES-Husbands & wives may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and CCC programs in which either has an interest. This option is automatically available unless a written request for exclusion is made to the county office by either spouse.

Improper Payments Information Act

The Improper Payments Information Act of 2002 holds FSA accountable for the paperwork and payments we process. FSA is currently reviewing program participation files to ensure all required paperwork is on file and completed properly. We are further reviewing if proper signature authority is on file with this office. This effort is quite extensive and absolutely imperative, and is being taken to protect you and your farming operation. As a result of these reviews, you may be required to submit additional documentation, and the application and payment process will take somewhat longer to complete.

Please understand this effort is necessary, and in your best interest as we strive to provide you with the best quality service possible. FSA appreciates your patience and cooperation.

2007 Acreage Reporting Requirements

Filing an accurate and timely acreage report for all crops/commodities and land uses can prevent loss of benefits for programs listed in the following table. The 2007 acreage reporting deadline for small grains was **March 15, 2007**. The deadline for hay, corn, fruits, vegetables and all other crops is **July 15, 2007**.

Benefit	Ac. Reporting Requirement	Reason for Requirement
Loans & LDP's	All cropland on the farm	Needed to determine reasonableness of claimed production. Required by FSRIA of 2002
DCP	All cropland on the farm	Required by FSRIA of 2002
NAP	Crop acreage or commodity for which NAP benefits may be requested	Needed to establish eligibility of the crop or commodity and producer for NAP benefits

IMPORTANT CROP REPORTING INFO FOR

NAP: The final date for reporting any crop acreage for NAP is the earlier of July 15 or 15 calendar days before the onset of harvest of the NAP crop.

Dates to Remember

Oct. 1, 2006	2007 DCP Enrollment began
March 15, 2007	Acreage Reporting Deadline for 2007 Small Grains
May 7, 2007	Deadline to file for Emergency Loan for crop losses due to July/06 heatwave
June 1, 2007	2007 DCP Signup Deadline
July 15, 2007	Acreage Reporting Deadline for 2007 crops other than small grains
Sept. 30, 2007	Deadline to file for Emergency Loan for crop losses due to January freeze
Sept. 30, 2007	Deadline to late-file for 2007 DCP

Disaster Declaration Information



USDA has designated 18 California counties, including Imperial County as primary natural disaster areas due to losses caused by extremely low temperatures and freezing conditions that occurred during the period January 6, 2007 through January 19, 2007. This declaration allows farm operators to apply for low-interest emergency loans from the Farm Service Agency. Farm operators in San Diego, Riverside and Yuma Counties are also eligible to apply.

Farmers in these counties have eight months from the date of the declaration (January 31, 2007) to apply for loans to help cover part of their actual losses. FSA will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability. For more information on eligibility requirements and application procedures, interested farmers should contact Gary Troester in our Indio office @ 760 347 3675 XT106. Additional information is also available online at: <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov>.

There are no other FSA programs in place at this time to respond to losses suffered due to the freezing temperatures. It is recommended producers contact their crop insurance agents, ag commissioner, and maintain good documentation of the freezing effects on their farming operation in the event future programs are enacted.

SPECIAL NOTE: A disaster declaration was issued on September 7, 2006 for the heat-wave California experienced in July, 2006. Imperial County was included in that designation and farmers have until May 7, 2007 to file for Emergency Loan assistance authorized by this particular declaration.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS – Special accommodations will be made, upon request, for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment or hearing impairment. If accommodations are required, please call this office and we will be happy to make any arrangements necessary.

CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLAINT PROCESS - Any person, class or group of persons may file a discrimination complaint within 180 days of an alleged discriminatory action. Complaints may be filed in writing or orally with the agency head, any designated agency official or the Secretary of Agriculture, USDA, Washington, DC 20250. Assistance in filing a complaint can be obtained by calling or visiting any FSA office.

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.

Direct & Counter-cyclical Program

To participate in the Direct & Counter-cyclical Program (DCP), producers are required to designate shares and sign the DCP contract (CCC-509) on a yearly basis. For 2007, the DCP sign-up period runs from October 1, 2006 to June 1, 2007.



In cases where a farm is reconstituted, all resulting farms will need to enroll if the producers intend to participate. CCC-509's with signatures obtained after June 1, but by September 30, 2007, will be accepted, but the farm will be assessed a late-filed sign-up fee of \$100. All supporting documentation, such as CCC-502, AD-1026 and CCC-526 must be submitted before payments can be issued. Annual acreage reports indicating uses of all cropland on a farm must be filed by the applicable established reporting dates. Acreage reports filed after the applicable final reporting date may be accepted if all requirements are met and a late-filed fee is paid.

DCP payments are calculated by taking 85% of the base acres, multiplied by the farm yield, times the applicable payment rate, times the producer share. Producers may receive an advance of the direct payment, beginning December of the program year. Final direct payments will be made on or after October 1 following the contract period. Counter-cyclical payments may also be authorized for one or more covered commodities, depending on the projected and actual market prices. The amount of a counter-cyclical payment is dependent upon the average of the actual prices received by farmers during the marketing year.

Landowner Designation-Reconstitutions

The designation by landowner method is the division of bases, allotments and quotas in the manner agreed to by the parent farm owner and purchaser or transferee. It may be used when part of the farm is sold or ownership transferred; an entire farm is sold to two or more persons; part of a tract is sold or ownership transferred; a tract is sold to two or more persons or tract ownership is transferred to two or more persons. This method may not be used to divide allotments or quotas, if the parent farm is located in two or more counties and the allotments and quotas cannot be transferred from one county to another by sale, lease or owner. An FSA-155 will be signed by the sellers and buyers (transferees). An exception can be made if there is a memorandum of understanding that is signed by all sellers and buyers and filed with FSA. The MOU will then be attached to the FSA-155.

BANK ACCOUNT CHANGES/DIRECT DEPOSIT – As of January 1, 1999 all FSA payments are supposed to be electronically transferred into your bank account. In order to make timely payments, you need to notify this office if you close or change your account information, or if another financial institution purchases your bank. Payments can be delayed if we are not aware of changes to your account and routing number.

FSA FARM LOANS – FSA makes both direct and guaranteed farm ownership and operating loans to family-size farmers and ranchers who cannot obtain commercial credit from a bank or other lender, including loans to beginning farmers & ranchers, socially disadvantaged applicants and youth loans. FSA loans can be used to purchase land, livestock, equipment, feed, seed and supplies. The loans can also be used to construct buildings or make farm improvements. If you're having trouble getting commercial credit, check with either Gary or Aurora in our Indio office (760 347 3675 ext. 2) about eligibility, as well as maximum loan amounts, rates, terms, use of proceeds or more information regarding socially disadvantaged applicants. You may also visit our website to learn more about FSA loans.

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. FSA 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% 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.

CHANGE IN FARMING OPERATION – If you have bought or sold land, or if you have picked up or dropped rented land from your operation, make sure you report the changes to this office as soon as possible. You need to provide proof of ownership (deed; tax-bill) for purchased property. Failure to maintain accurate records with FSA on all land you have an interest in can lead to possible program ineligibility and penalties.

MILCX EXTENDED SIGNUP - The extended signup phase for the MILCX program began May 18 and ends September 30, 2007. MILCX allows the continuation of financial assistance to dairy operations in connection with production sold in the commercial market when domestic prices fall below a specified level. Dairy operations that submit a MILCX for benefits during the extended signup phase can select as the MILCX production start month either the month the MILCX is submitted or from the remaining months in the fiscal year for which the payment rate is not known, and according to the start month selection process.

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, audiotope, 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.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Farm Service Agency
Imperial County FSA Office
177 N. Imperial Avenue
El Centro, CA 92201