



# NEWSLETTER



**January 2012**

## From the Desk of the State Director

### Maine State FSA Office

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State Executive Director

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### Hours

Monday - Friday  
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

### Maine FSA Staff

**Deborah J. Dufour,**  
Farm Loan Chief

**Ken Gustin,**  
Program Specialist/  
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**William R. Jordan**  
District Director

### Maine State Committee

**Annie Allen, Chair**  
**Anthony Carroll**  
**Jackie Lundeen**  
**Sandra Nutting**  
**Ralph Turner**

Welcome to the Maine State USDA, FSA Home Page. With this newsletter we are attempting to move into a new era for FSA. Our budget challenges have forced us to do some major adjustments to our delivery systems and outreach to our producer community. The paper newsletter of the past is being forced into extinction due to cost. We will do everything we can to make this as user friendly and helpful as possible. The FSA team welcomes any suggestions or comments, good and bad, regarding our first attempt to provide you with a new avenue of communications with us. Our goal is to make this newsletter a monthly event which our county offices can send out to you with updates on important dates and issues more directly related to each county as appropriate.



Our FSA staff remains committed to a high level of customer service and I, as State Director, am very proud of the job they do each and every day. It has been a very challenging year with reduced budgets forcing us to move to conference calls with State and County Committees along with reduced travel which has restricted outreach to our producers. We are adjusting to the new reality and hope via this newsletter to begin a new form of outreach for both you and us.

Monthly, you will find a complete list of State Committee and County Committee members as well as a current staff and address list for each of the county offices. Also included will be items related to upcoming events and important dates for you to remember and updated information on our Farm Loan programs.

I encourage anyone with questions about our programs to call their local County Office for a discussion about the many support programs we have available for producers within the State of Maine.

Please send any comments to MaryAnne Coffin at: [maryanne.coffin@me.usda.gov](mailto:maryanne.coffin@me.usda.gov).

IF you know anyone who would like to receive our newsletter simply have them stop by any county office or call us with their email address. Thanks!

## 2011 FSA County Committee Election Results

Congratulations to all newly elected and re-elected COC members to represent farmers from across Maine on the County Committee. FSA appreciates all of the voters for taking the time to complete the election ballot. The County Committee system works only because of your participation.

The Committee members will hold their organizational meeting in January to determine who will serve as the County Committee chairman and vice-chairman.

There is a complete listing of all County Committee members in the back of this newsletter.

## 71<sup>st</sup> Maine Agricultural Trade Show

The 71st Annual Maine Agricultural Trade Show was held January 10 - 12, 2012 in Augusta. There were over 100 exhibitors featuring the newest equipment, services and products. More than 5,000 people attended this year as it is one of the states largest agricultural events.

Farm Service Agency maintained a booth as it has for many years. Employees from many of the county offices and the state office take shifts to meet the public and reconnect with other agencies. It is a unique opportunity to be able to communicate with so many individuals connected to the agricultural world.



**Pictured (left to right): Front Row: Martha Albert, Maria Granger, Linda Testa & Jennifer Ranke; Back Row: Gary Raymond, Sherry Miller & Jennifer Geel**

On Tuesday, January 10, 2012, Department of Agriculture Commissioner Walter E. Whitcomb welcomed everyone to the Commissioner's Luncheon. A wide array of Maine products were served for lunch. Speakers were Commissioner Whitcomb as well as Governor Paul LePage. Commissioner Whitcomb stated in his remarks, "Maine agriculture represents a natural resources growth industry generating a billion dollars and employing thousands who are involved in the growing, transporting, processing, and marketing the widest array of fresh produce in the Northeast. Our annual Trades Show embodies the concept that all Maine food is local and promotes Maine's outstanding reputation as the breadbasket of New England."

The show along with the many booths, courses and speakers also offered demonstrations on food preparation, floral design and topics such as nutrient management, farm energy, woodlot issues and cheese making.

## 2012 DCP/ACRE Sign-up

2012 Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP) enrollment will begin Jan. 23, 2012 and will end June 1, 2012. Here are some IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

- All producers planting on **DCP base** acres must be identified on the DCP/ACRE contract and receive a proportionate share of DCP/ACRE payment for the farm.
- Changes on the farm after enrolling June 1<sup>st</sup> in DCP/ACRE **must** be reported to your local FSA office such as:
  - Ownership changes
  - Producer changes (Individuals and Entities)
  - Change in crop shares arrangements

**Note:** Changes cannot be made after Sept. 30, 2012.

## Hispanic and Women Farmers

A process to resolve the claims of Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers who believe they were discriminated against when seeking USDA farm loans has been established. If you believe that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) improperly denied farm loan benefits to you between 1981 and 2000 because you are Hispanic, or because you are female, you may be eligible to apply for compensation. For additional information on the Hispanic and Women Farmer Claims Process, please visit: [www.farmerclaims.gov](http://www.farmerclaims.gov)

## Office Consolidation Meeting

There will be a public meeting on February 1, 2012 at 2:00 PM at the Knox-Lincoln Cooperative Extension Office meeting room located at 377 Manktown Road in Waldoboro. This will be the only meeting held to take public comment on USDA's proposed office consolidation plan in which the Knox-Lincoln County FSA office is being considered for consolidation. Producers can also provide written comment by emailing [don.todd@me.usda.gov](mailto:don.todd@me.usda.gov) or sending written comment to 967 Illinois Avenue, Bangor, ME 04401, no later than February 11, 2012.

## 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, contact any Farm Service Agency office near you for more information.

## Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE)

The sign-up for 2010 losses runs through **June 1, 2012**. The Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE) provides benefits for farm revenue losses due to natural disasters that incurred in the crop year 2010. SURE is available to eligible producers on:

- Farms in counties with Secretarial disaster declarations, including contiguous counties, that have incurred crop production or quality losses, or both, and includes all crops grown by a producer nationwide, except grazed crops.
- Any farm in which, for the crop year, the actual production on the farm because of disaster-related conditions is 50 percent or less than normal production of the farm.

## Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)

The noninsured crop disaster assistance program (NAP) is a program that helps producers reduce their risk when growing food and fiber crops, specialty crops and crops for livestock feed. These benefits are only available for crops for which the catastrophic level of crop insurance is not available. Application for coverage must be filed by the applicable crop's application closing date.

Production records for all crops must be reported to FSA no later than the acreage reporting date for the crop for the following year. FSA requires that any production reported in a loss year be verifiable according to Agency specifications. ***NAP Losses must be reported within 15 days of loss.***

## 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.

## Commodity loans

Commodity loans, also known as Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL), are 9 month loans at low interest rates available to producers with short term finance needs. Producers can store eligible commodities during the loan period to delay sale until market conditions improve, or until the grain is needed. Producers must share in the risk of producing the crop, and maintain control of the commodity.

The commodity must be stored in an eligible structure, and the loan can be repaid at or before maturity with interest. The commodity is pledged as loan collateral.

Eligible commodities include small grains and coarse grains, oilseeds and honey. Contact your local FSA Office for loan rates and application details.

## Customer Statement

January signals the beginning of a new year, and a time to starting thinking about filing taxes. Producers who have signed up for a USDA eAuthentication Level 2 account will be able to access their farm data via their Customer Statement.

The Customer Statement puts a range of USDA services and programs into a single report that's at your fingertips and available online, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

It allows USDA customers to view their participation, application and payment status in various commodity and conservation programs; information on farm loans; and conservation plan and land unit information.

Dates to Remember	
Mar 15	NAP Signup Deadline for all spring seeded crops
Jan. 23	2012 DCP Enrollment begins
Jan. 30	Sign-up ends Jan. 30, 2012, for LFP, LIP, and ELAP.
Jan. 31	Deadline to apply for Unshorn Lamb Pelts Loan Deficiency Payment

## **FSA Signature Policy**

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

There are exceptions to the rule, where spouses may not sign on behalf of each other for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations or other similar entities.

Individual signatures are also required on certain Farm Loan Program and Farm Storage Facility Loan documents.

For more clarification on spousal signature authority, contact your local FSA office.

## **Farming Operation Changes**

If you have bought or sold land, or if you have added or dropped rented land from your operation, make sure you report the changes to the office as soon as possible. You need to provide a copy of your deed or recorded land contract 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. Making the record changes now will save you time in the spring. Update signature authorization when changes in the operation occur. Producers are reminded to contact the office of a change in operations on a farm so that records can be kept current and accurate.

## **Bank Account Changes**

Current policy mandates that FSA payments be electronically transferred into your bank account. For timely payments to be made, producers need to notify the FSA office if the 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.

## **IRS Form 1099-G**

Producers annually receive CCC-1099-Gs detailing payments producers have received from the Commodity Credit Corporation. The annual report of program payments on CCC-1099-Gs is a service intended to help our customers report taxable income. It is not intended to replace the producers' responsibilities to report income to IRS.

FSA staff cannot interpret IRS regulations or advise producers about which payments to report on their income tax returns. However, county office staff can review payments for accuracy.

## **Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation Compliance**

Landowners and operators are reminded that in order to receive payments and be eligible for loans from USDA, compliance with Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions are required. Farmers with HEL determined soils are reminded of tillage, crop residue, and rotation requirements as specified per their conservation plan. Producers are to notify the USDA Farm Service Agency prior to conducting land clearing or drainage projects to insure compliance. Failure to obtain advance approval for any of these situations can result in the loss of eligibility and all Federal payments.

## **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.

All individuals who are not U.S. citizens, and have purchased or sold agricultural land in the county are required to report the transaction to FSA with 90 days of the closing. Failure to submit the AFIDA form (FSA-153) 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.

## 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.

## LDPs for Unshorn Lamb Pelts

Eligible producers have until Jan. 31, 2012, to apply for Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP) for unshorn pelts produced during the 2011 crop year.

Eligible producers must have beneficial interest in the pelts, owned the lamb for at least 30 calendar days before the date of slaughter and sell the unshorn lamb for immediate slaughter. Producers must also comply with wetland conservation and highly erodible land conservation provisions on all lands they operate or have interest in.

To qualify for payment, pelts must have been produced by an eligible producer from live unshorn lambs of domestic origin in the United States.

## 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.

## Farm Loan Programs

The Farm Service Agency is committed to providing family farmers with loans to meet their farm credit needs. If you are having trouble getting the credit you need for your farm, or regularly borrow from FSA, direct and guaranteed loans are currently available.

Ask your lender about an FSA loan guarantee if your lender is reluctant to extend or renew your loan.

Farm ownership loans or farm operating loans may be obtained as direct loans for a maximum of up to \$300,000. Guaranteed loans have a maximum limit of \$1,214,000. This makes the maximum combination of direct and guaranteed loan indebtedness \$1,514,000.

The one-time loan origination fee charged on FSA guaranteed farm ownership and operating loans has increased from 1 percent to 1.5 percent of the guaranteed portion of the loan, for loans obligated after October 1, 2011.

To find out more about FSA loan programs, contact the county office staff.

### Selected Interest Rates for January 2012

90-Day Treasury Bill	0.125
Farm Operating - Direct	1.5
Farm Ownership - Direct	3.5
Limited Resource	5.0
Farm Ownership - Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.5
Emergency	3.75
Farm Storage Facility—7 Year	1.375
Farm Storage Facility—10 Year	2.0
Farm Storage Facility—12 Year	2.250
9 Month Commodity Loan	1.125

## 2012 State Committee Members

**Annie Allen, Chair**

**Anthony Carroll, Vice-Chairman**

**Jacqueline Lundeen, Member**

**Sandra Nutting, Member**

**Ralph Turner, Member**

## 2012 County Committee Members

### **Androscoggin-Sagadahoc Aroostook**

Dwight Buckley

William Bullard

Cathy Karonis

Virginia Roseberry

Adam Trundy

Joey Bouchard

James Lilley

Sue McCrum

Scott Moir

### **Cumberland-York**

Tim Bartlett

Jennifer Grant

Edward LeBlanc

John Snell, Jr.

Dave Tuttle

### **Franklin**

Randall Hall

Teresa Hardy

Rupert Pratt

L. Hebert York

### **Kennebec**

Neal Caverly

Berndt Graf

Jeremiah Smith

Bridget Wright

### **Knox-Lincoln**

Donald Burke

Robert E. Clark

Linda Dean

Joanne Myers

Julie Russell

### **Oxford**

Carole Robbins

Laurie Weston

Peter Young

### **Penobscot-Hancock**

Seth Bradstreet, III

Ruth Allen Gray

Terry Hicks

Barry Higgins, Jr.

Shannon Lions

### **Piscataquis**

Owen Brown

Olive Buck

Blake Smith

### **Somerset**

Richard Calder

Andrew Sevey

Luke Sites

Ann Wishart-Strout

### **Waldo**

Janet Aitken

Jeff Keene

Alfred Wren

### **Washington**

Jane Bell

Clayton Blake

Delmont Emerson

## Maine FSA County Office Contacts

### ANDRO/SAG COUNTY OFFICE

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### HOULTON COUNTY OFFICE

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Tel: (207) 532-9407 Fax: (207) 532-4379  
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### AROOSTOOK COUNTY OFFICE (PI)

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### FORT KENT COUNTY OFFICE

Doreen Conlogue, CED  
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### PENOBSCOT/HANCOCK COUNTY OFFICE

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