



**UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE**

*LEE COUNTY
COMMITTEE & STAFF*

William Buchanan - Chairman
Mike Gaster - Vice Chairman
Sam Harrington- Member
John Cameron – Advisor
Rebecca Kelly - Advisor
Amber Waller – CED
Karen Smith – Lead PT
Tami Thomas – PT

PHONE 919-775-3407 ext. 2
FAX 919-776-7104
WEBSITE www.fsa.usda.gov

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, family status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a 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 communications of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact the USDA's TARGET CENTER at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20205-9401 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

OFFICE HOURS

**Monday – Friday
8:00 am – 4:30 pm**

Farm Service Agency

Lee County Farm Service Agency

Newsletter

June 7, 2007



Make A Difference – VOTE

From June 15th through August 1st, farmers and ranchers can nominate eligible peers as candidates for election to the Lee County Farm Service Agency county committee. This is an important time for the community because county committee members make decisions that have significant effects on you and the area's agricultural sector as a whole. For example, committee members make decisions on applications for federal farm program and disaster payments. Committee members play a vital role by helping local farmers and ranchers during tough financial times and natural disasters. Also, committee members are responsible for hiring the county executive director – a key player in the delivery of farm programs. County committee members make many other important decisions that affect local farmers and ranchers, such as whether haying and grazing should be allowed on Conservation Reserve Program land. Talk to a county committee member or the CED for details on the types of decisions county committee members make.

To hold office as a county committee member, a person must meet basic eligibility requirements. Contact the county office staff or visit

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pas/publications/ele> ctions for details about candidate eligibility. Nomination forms can be obtained at the county office or online at the above address.

Remember, the nomination period runs June 15th through August 1st. Voting takes place in the fall. Ballots will be mailed to

eligible voters by November 2. December 3rd is the last day to return voted ballots to the county office. Newly elected committee members and alternates take office January 1, 2008.

Reporting Crop Acreage

The annual requirement of reporting to the FSA office can be referred to as crop reporting, acreage reporting, or crop certification. Filing an accurate and timely report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage, can prevent loss of benefits for a variety of Farm Service Agency programs. All cropland on the farm must be reported to receive benefits from the Direct and Counter-cyclical Program, marketing assistance loans and Loan Deficiency Payments.

Conservation Reserve Program acreage must be reported to receive annual rental payments. And, crop acreage for Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) must also be reported.

Crop reports, form FSA-578, Report of Acreage, must account for all cropland on a farm, whether idle or planted. Producers are required to file reports by **June 30** for all crops except burley tobacco. Burley tobacco should be reported by **July 15**.

Prevented Planting:

Prevented planting needs to be reported no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date.

Failed Acreage:

Reports of failed acreage must be filed before disposition of the crop, and producers must be able to establish to the satisfaction of the county committee that the crop failed and was prevented from being replanted through the normal planting period because of natural disaster conditions.

Outreach Program

The Farm Service Agency makes direct and guaranteed loans to socially disadvantaged applicants, enabling them to buy and operate family-size farms and ranches. Funds are reserved each year specifically for these loans, but regular loan funds can also be used.

Direct loans may be made to qualified applicants by FSA for both farm operating and farm ownership purposes. Guaranteed farm loans also may be made for ownership or operating purposes, and may be made by any lending institution subject to Federal or state supervision (banks, savings and loans, and units of the Farm Credit System) and guaranteed by FSA. Some state governments also operate farm loan programs that are eligible for FSA guarantees. FSA typically guarantees 90 or 95 percent of a loan against any loss that might be incurred if the loan fails.

Persons who are primarily and directly engaged in farming and ranching on family-size operations may apply. A family-size farm is one that a family can operate and manage itself.

Socially disadvantaged loan applicants do not receive automatic approval. In addition to being members of a socially disadvantaged group, individual applicants under this program must meet all requirements for FSA's regular farm loan program assistance, including:

Have a satisfactory history of meeting credit obligations.

Have sufficient education; training, or at least one-year's experience in managing or operating a farm or ranch within the last five years for a direct operating loan, or, for a direct farm ownership loan, have participated in the business operation of a farm or ranch for three years;

Be a citizen of the United States (or a legal resident alien), including Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and certain former Pacific Island Trust Territories;

Be unable to obtain credit elsewhere at reasonable rates and terms to meet actual needs; and

Possess legal capacity to incur loan obligations.

A socially disadvantaged person 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.

Contact the FSA County Office Farm Loan Program staff for more details about this program, and other financial options.

Utilizing GIS

The Farm Service Agency currently employs a Geographic Information System (GIS), a computer-based tool for capturing, storing, mapping and analyzing geographic farm data. FSA uses GIS to replace the old manual system of hard copy maps and aerial photographs. This digital technology is faster and more accurate than the old way, and saves taxpayers money over the long term.

Here's how GIS works. Up-to-date aerial photographs of the entire county are scanned so they can be stored in the computer. The photos become the base layer of the GIS. Technicians examine the photos and identify individual farms. They then outline each farm field, creating another layer of data called the Common Land Unit (CLU).

The software stores the shape of the field as a "polygon," and ties it to a specific location using latitude and longitude. The software can then automatically calculate the size of each field. The CLU layer will be connected to a database that contains information about the cropping history for each particular field.

GIS gives us the tools to provide quicker, more accurate information to producers and reduce the amount of time the producer must spend in the FSA office.

**Lee County FSA Office Closed
On July 4th for Independence
Day**