



Merced-Mariposa County News

Merced County
USDA Service Center

Merced County FSA
2135 W. Wardrobe Ave.
Suite B
Merced, CA 95340
209-722-4119 x 2(phone)
209-725-2964(fax)
www.fsa.usda.gov

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

County Committee
Bob Deol
Lucy Nunes
Gary Preston
RoseAnn Serrano
Chet Sumpter

County Committee meets
The 3rd Thursday of the
month.

Farm Programs Staff:

Mariann Cardoso
Lisandra Lima
Gizela Meirinho-Gover
Rui Nunes
Lydia Swilley

Laura J. Westerfield, CED

Farm Loan Staff

Phyllis Boyle
Chantal Haun
Jeff Kincaid

LaVon Treasure, FLM

Election Update

The period to nominate candidates for the upcoming county committee election is closed. Nominations were due in the county office on Tuesday, Aug. 1. Ballots will be mailed to all eligible voters by Nov. 3. Voted and signed ballots must be returned to the county office by **Dec. 4.**

We received ballots from: John C. Dores of Stevinson, Bob Deol of Livingston and Chet Sumpter of Dos Palos. Be on the lookout for future newsletters that will give you a little more information about each of these candidates.

County committee elections give farmers and ranchers an important opportunity to ensure that their FSA county committees represent them.

Farmers and ranchers who serve on county committees help make decisions necessary to administer federal farm programs offered in their communities. County committees make decisions on agricultural issues such as commodity price support loans and payments, conservation programs, disaster payments and employing county executive directors.

You can obtain a complete list of eligibility requirements by visiting the county office or online at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pas/publications/facts/html/cocelig06.htm>.

- Ballots will be mailed to eligible voters by Nov. 3. The last day to return voted ballots to the county office is Dec. 4.
- Newly elected county committee members take office Jan.1, 2007.

Production and Physical Loss Emergency Loans Available

On June 5, 2006, President Bush declared a major disaster in the State of California covering physical and production losses caused by severe storms, flooding, landslides and mudslides that occurred on March 29, 2006 to April 16, 2006. Merced, Mariposa and Madera Counties have been included in this declaration. The deadline to file an application is February 5, 2007.

On June 15, 2006, the Secretary of Agriculture also designated Merced, Mariposa and Madera Counties for physical and production losses caused by unprecedented rainfall, severe weather conditions that occurred from December 17, 2005, through April 26, 2006. The deadline to file an application is February 15, 2007.

For applicants to be eligible, they must:

- Have suffered at least a 30 percent loss of normal production directly related to the above cited cause(s)
- Be able to repay the loan and any other loans,
- Be **unable** to obtain credit elsewhere,
- Have adequate security, and
- Have multi-peril crop insurance, if available.

All applicants must complete a certification of disaster losses, which reflects the exact date(s) and nature of the designated disaster and how it caused the loss of damage. Crop insurance field reports may be a source for documenting losses directly related to the cited cause.

For more information, please contact the Merced County Office and ask to speak with someone on the loan staff.



Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) Deadlines

The Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) was designed to reduce financial losses that occur when natural disasters cause a catastrophic loss of production or prevented planting of an eligible crop by providing coverage equivalent to catastrophic (CAT) insurance. Statute limits NAP to each commercial crop or agricultural commodity, except livestock, for which CAT is not available and is produced for food or fiber.

NAP coverage requires a service fee of \$100 per crop, per producer, per county. Out-of-pocket expenses for any producer will not exceed \$900, even if production occurs in more than three counties. Service fees may be waived for eligible limited resource producers.

When your crop or planting is affected by a natural disaster, you must notify your local FSA office by completing a notice of loss within 15 calendar days of the; 1) Natural disaster occurrence, 2) final planting date, if your planting was prevented by a natural disaster, 3) date damage to the crop or loss of production becomes apparent to you, or 4) the normal harvest date. Failure to timely notify this office, may result in the loss of benefits.

2007 Nap Closing Dates	
2007 Forage Crops	September 1, 2006
Value Loss/Controlled Environment Crops (aquaculture, flowers or Christmas trees)	September 1, 2006
Fall planted Garlic	October 1, 2006
Honey	December 1, 2006
Fruit & Nut Tree Crops, Almonds, Apricots, Asparagus, Cranberries, Cherries, Grapes, Kiwi, Mint, Nectarines, Olives, Peaches, Pears, Persimmons, Pistachios, Plums, Pomegranates, Most Strawberries, Walnut	December 15, 2006
2008 Citrus	January 1, 2007
2007 Apples	January 31, 2007

The coverage period for NAP may vary depending on whether you grow annual, perennial or value loss crops. The coverage period for annual crops begins the later of; 30 days after you apply for coverage or the date your crop is

planted, not to exceed the final planting date. The coverage period for **perennial crops** always begin 30 calendar days after the application closing date.

Many sales closing dates are quickly approaching. Please call and speak with Gizela Meirinho-Gover at the FSA office for more information.

Animal Losses due to Heat

Things have cooled down a little here in the valley, but we know that many of your farming operations were affected by the record setting heat the last two weeks of July. We here at all governmental levels are working to compile the statistics to support a disaster declaration request.

Agriculture Commissioner David Robinson has requested a disaster declaration from the Governor. A Disaster Declaration may enable USDA to provide programs such as Emergency Loans and Livestock Indemnity Programs. This type of disaster declaration is a Secretarial Declaration.

Congress also has the ability to declare a disaster. You may want to let your Congressional representatives know how the recent heat wave affected your farming/ranching operations.

Should programs become available your eligibility will depend on the documentation you have to support the number, type, size and age of animals lost. Those of you who had to bury animals on the farm should have third party verification (someone not involved in the farming/dairying operation).

The animals that went to rendering plants or landfills should be accounted for on receipts. Please take the time to make sure you have your documentation in order. If and when programs become available you will be prepared.

While we cannot assume what type of program may be offered, you may look at the fact sheet on the Livestock Indemnity Program offered for victims of Hurricane Katrina available on our website. Click on Fact Sheets in the blue banner on the left hand side of the page then select Disaster Programs.



Crop Losses due to Heat

Those of you who had crop damage due to the heat please report the damage to Mark Smith at the Agriculture Commissioners office (209) 385-7431, your crop insurance agent and the Farm Service Agency (209) 722-4119 ext. 2 (request form number FSA-576 from Lisandra Lima).

Foreign Landowner 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.

Foreign person who 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 could result in civil penalties of up to 25 percent of the fair market value of the property.

County government offices, real estate agents, attorneys and others involved real estate transactions are reminded to notify foreign investors of these reporting requirements.

Security Guidelines

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has released a booklet entitled "Pre-Harvest Security Guidelines and Checklist 2006" to help agricultural producers enhance security at the farm level. The booklet contains practical measures to help protect against natural disasters, as well as the unintentional or intentional introduction of plant or animal diseases. To get a copy, stop by the county office. More information is available at <http://www.usda.gov/homelandsecurity>.

Controlled Substances

Program participants convicted under federal or state law of any planting, cultivating, growing, producing, harvesting or storing a controlled substance are ineligible for program payments and benefits.

If convicted of one of these offenses, the program participant shall be ineligible during that crop year and the four succeeding crop years for direct and counter-cyclical payments, price support loans, loan deficiency payments, mar-

ket loan gains, storage payments, farm facility loans, Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program payments or disaster payments.

Program participants convicted of any federal or state offense consisting of the distribution (trafficking) of a controlled substance shall, at the discretion of the court, be ineligible for any or all program payments and benefits:

- for up to 5 years after the first conviction
- for up to 10 years after the second conviction
- permanently for a third or subsequent conviction.

Program participants convicted of federal or state offense for the possession of a controlled substance shall be ineligible, at the discretion of the court, for any or all program benefits, as follows:

- up to 1 year upon the first conviction
- up to 5 years after a second or subsequent conviction.

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)

EQIP Sign-ups are on going, but to be considered for 2007 monies, you must have a complete application on file by December 1, 2006.

Completed applications included the following items: project design, current cost estimate, partnership or corporation documents, signature authority information, financial institution information, proof of landownership and or lease information and crop and irrigation history

New for the 2007 program is the method used to determine level of cost share. Instead of using a percent of actual cost, practices will be cost-shared based on the average cost of a practice as determined by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist.

Visit the NRCS state website for more information on approved practices and average costs.

www.canrcs.usda.gov

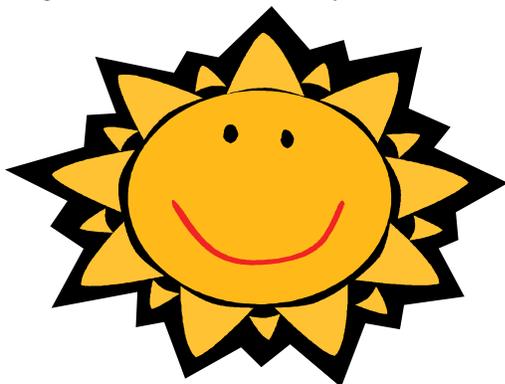
You can also call NRCS at (209) 722-4119 x 3.

**County Executive
 Directors
 Corner**

I would like to thank all of you for timely reporting your crops this year. We hope that the spreadsheet we provided you during the 2006 DCP sign-up along with copies of your field maps helped you to report your crops without additional trips to the County Office. I would like feedback from all of you regarding this and other services that might make your time at the FSA Office more efficient and effective. Feel free to contact me at (209) 722-4119 ext 104 or at Laura.westerfield@ca.usda.gov

Reasonable Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations will be made, upon request, for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment or hearing impairment. If special accommodations are required, please call the Farm Service Agency county office staff, and we will be happy to make any arrangements that are necessary.



Dates to Remember	
September 1	NAP Forage Sales Closing Date
September 4	Labor Day - offices closed.
September 14	Final day to select October as MILC start month
September 30	Final date to sign 2006 Direct & Counter-Cyclical Program Contract
October	Final 2005 Cotton Counter-Cyclical Payments Issued
October	Final 2006 Direct DCP Payments Issued
October 9	Columbus Day – Office closed
November 3	County Committee Election Ballots mailed
December 1	EQIP Sign-Up Deadline
December 4	Last day to return ballots for county committee election

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, audiotape, 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.