



May, 2008

Issue No. 2

COVERED BRIDGE COURIER

St. Joseph County FSA
693 E. Main Street
Centreville, MI 49032
269-467-6336, EXT 2
269-467-4356 FAX

www.fsa.usda.gov
www.sc.egov.usda.gov

Hours

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

County Committee

Daniel Sharp, Chairman
James Struble, Vice
Chairman
Timothy Wagner, Member
Ann Kauffman, Advisor

Staff

Robert Avery, FA
Gayle Britten, PT, FA
Phillip DeYoung, FLM
Michelle Fambro, PT
Carol Fetterolf, PT
Sharon Hoch, CED
Dana Sherman, PT

DATES TO REMEMBER IN 2008:

May 26 – Office closed for Memorial Day.
May 31 – Final date to apply for 2007-crop corn, grain sorghum, soybean loans and loan deficiency payments.
June 30 – Deadline to report fall-seeded small grains, including rye, speltz, wheat.
July 4 – Office closed for Independence Day.
July 15 – Deadline to report all crops except fall-seeded small grains.
August 1 – Final date to request farm combinations or divisions.

Are you a spouse that owns land? Then notify our office, so you are able to participate in our elections and receive our mailings.



REPORTING CROP ACREAGE

All cropland on a farm must be reported in order to receive payments from most Farm Service Agency or Commodity Credit Corporation Programs, including the annual farm program, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), marketing assistance loans and loan deficiency payments, and the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program.

Failed acreage, fallow ground, grass, hay, and pasture must be reported, as well as annually planted crops.

Failure to timely report cropland use may result in a loss of program benefits, and/or a late-filing fee. The farm operator; farm owner; person authorized by power of attorney; or tenants and sharecroppers for the crop acreage for which they have a share, may report crop acreage.

The deadlines to report cropland use are:

June 30 – fall-seeded small grains, including rye, speltz, and wheat.

July 15 – all crops, except fall-seeded small grains.

Reminder: You are required to tell us the day that you planted each crop, including hay and pasture. Please bring these dates with you.

We are once again taking appointments for crop reporting, so please call us for your appointment. Your crops must be planted before you can report them.

Beat the rush! If you do not have any annually planted crops, call today for your appointment.



LOAN DEADLINES

Your time is running out to receive a loan on your 2007-crop corn, grain sorghum, or soybeans. May 31st is the deadline to apply for marketing assistance loans on these crops. These loans allow you to use your crop as collateral, so you can obtain short-term financing to purchase seed, fertilizer, etc.

Loans mature on the last day of the ninth calendar month following the month in which the loan is approved.



2007-Crop Loan Rates:

Corn - \$1.90
Grain Sorghum - \$3.33
Soybeans - \$5.01

LOAN REMINDERS

If you have an outstanding commodity loan, make sure you continually monitor the storage structure to make sure it is secure and free of leaks **and** the commodity to make sure it is still in good condition.

Liquidated damages and penalties may be assessed, if loan grain is moved without previous authorization.

If you need to move the commodity, or are planning to feed or sell some loan commodity, make sure you request authorization BEFORE you take any action.

EMERGENCY LOANS AVAILABLE

USDA/FSA emergency farm loans are available in St. Joseph County to all qualified farm operators as a result of losses caused by the following weather conditions:

<i>Designation Code & Declaration Date</i>	<i>Disaster Description</i>	<i>Dates of Disaster</i>	<i>Final Date To Apply</i>
S2628 11/07/2007	Drought	04/01/2007 & continuing	07/07/2008
S2631 11/14/2007	Several Frost and Freeze Events	04/04/2007- 06/13/2007	07/14/2008
S2636 11/20/2007	Tornadoes, Hail, Excessive Rain, and High Winds	05/15/2007- 09/11/2007	07/21/2008
N-912 10/07/2007	Storms with Tornadoes, Hail and High Winds Physical losses only.	07/03/07- 08/29/07	06/05/2008
M1740 01/30/2008	Severe Storms and Flooding	01/07/2008	09/30/2008
S2657 12/27/2007	Extended Drought	06/05/2007- 11/07/2007	08/27/2008

Emergency loan funds may be used to:

- Restore or replace essential property;
- Pay all or part of production costs associated with the disaster year;
- Pay essential family living expenses;
- Reorganize the farming operation; and
- Refinance certain debts.

The current annual interest rate for emergency loans is 3.75 percent.

Please contact Phillip DeYoung or Dana Sherman for more details.

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.



CROP INSURANCE FRAUD AND ABUSE

With the passage of the Agricultural Risk Protection Act 2000, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Risk Management Agency (RMA) are required to coordinate a plan to identify, address, and reconcile discrepancies of all relevant producer-derived information. FSA and RMA are further directed to coordinate a monitoring program, which includes fact finding relative to allegations of Federal Crop Insurance Program (FCIC) fraud, waste, and abuse. As a key preventative measure, it is important that the agricultural community be made fully aware of FSA's and RMA's joint efforts to reduce fraud, waste, and abuse of the FCIC program by the following methods:

- FSA will be assisting RMA and insurance providers in monitoring crop conditions throughout the growing season.
- FSA will refer all suspected cases of fraud, waste, and abuse about the Federal Crop Insurance Program to RMA.
- Producers may report suspected cases of fraud, waste, and abuse to their local FSA County Office, RMA Office, or the Office of the Inspector General.
- FSA will assist RMA with auditing claims.

PREVENTED PLANTED CROPS

If you are unable to plant a crop during the established planting period because of a natural disaster, you need to contact our office. **To be considered timely filed, you must report the acreage and complete paperwork in our office within 15 calendar days after the final planting date.**

The final planting dates for St. Joseph County are:

Barley – May 20, 2008
Corn – June 5, 2008
Oats – May 20, 2008
Popcorn – May 31, 2008
Soybeans – June 15, 2008

Producers must be able to show that:

- All cropland feasible to plant, but prevented from being planted, was affected by a natural disaster, rather than a management decision.
- Preliminary efforts made by the producer to plant the crop are evident, such as disking the land, orders for purchase, or delivery of seed and fertilizer.

Late-filed prevented planting acreage claims will be accepted, if certain guidelines are met. Contact our office for more information, if you miss the filing deadline.

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE TO VOTE?

Any person of legal age who has an interest in a farm as an owner or operator is eligible to participate in FSA programs and the FSA County Committee election.

The election of agricultural producers to FSA county committees is important to ALL farmers with large or small operations. It is crucial that every eligible producer participate in these elections, because FSA county committees are a link between the agricultural community and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

LAA # 3 is up for election this year. This includes Burr Oak, Colon, Fawn River, Sherman, and Sturgis Townships. We encourage all eligible persons to submit a nomination form. This is a great opportunity for beginning farmers, minorities, women and others to learn more about FSA's programs and to make important decisions that affect all of the farmers in St. Joseph County.



Important Dates for the COC Election:

- **June 15, 2008** – Nomination period begins. Request nomination forms from our office or obtain one online at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov> under News & Events/County Committee Elections.
- **August 1, 2008** – Last day to file nomination forms at the local USDA Service Center.

If you or someone you know may be eligible for our programs or would like to be included in our mailings, please contact our office for more information. Additional information on COC elections is available at:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pas/publications/elections>

Then put "COC Elections" in the search field.

REPORT CHANGES NOW

Report any changes to our office now, so we are able to update this information before you sign into the annual program. This will allow us to process your program payments more quickly, and get your money to you sooner. Changes may include, but are not limited to:

- **Address** - Contact information, as well as temporary address changes.
- **Direct Deposit** - Changes in banking or account information.
- **Non-Ag** - New parcels of land removed for houses or other nonagricultural purposes.
- **Owner/Operator Changes** - Changes in land ownership, tenants or crop share arrangements.
- **Reconstitutions** - Farm combinations or separations due to sale of land or change in operators.

SODBUSTER REGULATIONS



The term "sodbusting" is used to identify the removal of erosion-prone native grasslands/ woodlands for use as cropland. You should be aware that if you use highly erodible land for crop production without proper conservation measures, **you risk losing eligibility to participate in ALL USDA programs.**

You must file an AD-1026, *Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification*, in our office, before you clear, plow or otherwise prepare areas not presently under crop production. Also, notify us before you improve drainage by tiling or dredging. These are potential violations.

Call our office or stop by BEFORE you take any action to convert a wetland, clear trees, etc.

CONTINUOUS CRP SIGN-UP

USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a voluntary program that helps agricultural producers safeguard environmentally sensitive land. CRP participants plant long-term, resource-conserving covers to improve the quality of water, control soil erosion, and enhance wildlife habitat. FSA, in return, provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance and other financial incentives.

Environmentally desirable land devoted to certain conservation practices may be enrolled in CRP at any time, under continuous sign-up. Offers are automatically accepted, provided the land and producer meet certain eligibility requirements. Offers for continuous sign-up are not subject to competitive bidding.

The following practices are eligible for continuous CRP:

Contour grass strips, filter strips, grass waterways, riparian buffers, living snow fences, shelterbelts, wetland buffers, wetland restorations, wildlife habitat buffers.



Call for an appointment if you are interested in



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
 ST JOSEPH COUNTY FARM SERVICE AGENCY
 693 EAST MAIN STREET
 CENTREVILLE, MICHIGAN 49032

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LATEST FARM BILL NEWS

Information regarding the 2008 farm bill and the pending 2008 enrollment is hold. Some information has been received through press releases, articles, etc. but nothing has been finalized and enrollment options, dates and/or deadlines have not been established. We will keep you informed of any updates through newsletters, radio announcements, and mailings.

DISASTER PROGRAMS CONTINUE

No deadline has been set for the 2005/2006/2007 Crop Disaster Program or the 2005/2006/2007 Livestock Compensation Program. If you had an eligible production loss or quality loss due to a natural disaster in any of these years, please contact our office to see if you qualify for financial assistance.

Non-Discrimination Statement

The U.S. 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, 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, DC 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Revised: 6/8/2005

Special accommodations will be made upon request for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment, or hearing impairment. If accommodations are required, please contact Sharon Hoch at 269-467-6336, EXT 2.