



Farm Service Agency

January 2007
Sonoma/Marin County News
USDA Service Center



COUNTY COMMITTEE ELECTION RESULTS

Congratulations to Richard Grossi & Phil Dolcini. Richard was re-elected to represent farmers from LAA-1 on the county committee. Phil was re-elected to represent farmers from LAA-3 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 held their organizational meeting in January and determined Cynthia Crane will serve as the county committee chairperson and Craig Jacobsen will serve as vice-chairperson.

FARMER'S CHOICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE COUNTY

Until recently the County Administrative office for program participants was basically the county office in which the principal farm operator resided. Now a change in a farm's administrative county may be permitted without completing a farm combination in the receiving county, if the producer documents that the changed administrative County Office is significantly more convenient. Changing an administrative County Office because of convenience is a one time selection (for the current operator) and will not be used to evade program rules.

Those who use the convenience method will still be able to vote for county committee candidates running for county committee in their original county's Local Administrative Area, however they will not be permitted to be a candidate for that county's committee. A farm transfer can be initiated by the farm's operator or owner or the receiving or transferring county committee. All owners and operator must sign a FSA-179, **TRANSFER OF FARM RECORDS BETWEEN COUNTIES**.

January 2007 County Newsletter Articles

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Sonoma/Marin County FSA
1301 Redwood Way, 190
Petaluma, CA 94954
707-664-8593 (phone)
707-794-7902 (fax)

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

County Committee
Cynthia Crane
Craig Jacobsen
Diane Starkey
Phil Dolcini
Richard Grossi

County Committee meets
The first Tuesday after
the first Monday of every
month

Staff
Lisa Velasquez
County Executive Director
Debbie Castle
Program Technician



United States Department of Agriculture

FOREIGN BUYERS NOTIFICATION

The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act 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 persons 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, Realtors, attorneys and others involved in real estate transactions are reminded to notify foreign investors of these reporting requirements.

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.

SPECIAL ACCOMODATIONS

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 directly or by phone.

POWER OF ATTORNEY

For those who find it difficult to visit the county office personally because of work schedules, distance, health, etc., we have a power of attorney form available that enables you to designate another person to conduct your business at the office. If you are interested, please contact our office or any Farm Service Agency office near you for more information.

PAYMENT LIMITATION/ELIGIBILITY

USDA payments and benefits are subject to producer eligibility and limitation provisions as defined by law.

Documents and forms to determine eligibility and limitations once completed are reviewed on an annual basis. It is the producer's responsibility to report changes in the farming operation which may affect payment eligibility and payment limitation.

The following payments apply to DCP for each contract year under the new Farm bill comes through both direct and counter-cyclical payments. For all covered commodities, except peanuts: \$40,000 for direct payments and \$65,000 for counter-cyclical payments. For peanuts: \$40,000 for direct payments and \$65,000 for counter-cyclical payments. The Environmental Quality Incentive Program has a \$450,000 payment limitation. The Conservation Reserve Programs annual limit is \$50,000 per person.

Entities such as corporations, limited partnerships, trusts and estates are required to provide names, addresses, and ID numbers of their members. These entities should also inform every payment under more than one entity.

BANK ACCOUNT CHANGES

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

SPOUSAL SIGNATURES

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.

APPEAL PROCESS

After an FSA official makes a decision on your request for USDA services or application, you will be sent a letter informing you of the decision and options you can pursue if you disagree.

Generally, program participants have three choices – an informal review with the original agency decision maker, an opportunity for mediation and appeal to the USDA National Appeal Division.

LOANS FOR SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) can make and guarantee loans to eligible socially disadvantaged applicants to buy and operate family size farms and ranches. Funds specifically for these loans are reserved each year. A socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of the group without regard their individual qualities. For purposes of this program, socially disadvantaged groups are women, African Americans, American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, and Asians and Pacific Islanders. Contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager or Officer for more details and assistance in applying.

FARM STORAGE FACILITY LOANS STORAGE LIMITATIONS

If you noticed you didn't have enough room to store your silage then maybe it is time for a new bunker. Did you know FSA's Facility Loan Program provides funding to finance bunkers and other facilities to store silage and high moisture corn? If interested, be sure you contact the office details. It is important to remember that you cannot start any work on the site nor have any material delivered until after your loan has been approved by FSA.

APPLICATIONS FOR FSA LOANS

Farmers and ranchers that intend to apply to the Farm Service Agency for loan assistance for the upcoming crop year are encouraged to file their applications as early as possible. Filing early will help ensure that your application is processed and a decision made as soon as possible so that planting decisions can be made. Failure to apply early can result in a delay in processing loans due to the volume of applications that must be processed in date order. Contact your local FSA farm loan manager or officer for more details and assistance in applying.

YOUTH LOANS

Remember FSA makes operating loans to individual rural youths age 10 through 20 to establish and operate income producing projects. These projects must be of modest size and be initiated, developed, carried out by rural youths participating in 4-H Clubs, FFA, or a similar organization or with a vocational teacher or county extension agent. The project must be an organized and supervised program of work. It must be planned and operated with the assistance of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan, and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. Contact your local FSA office for more details.

CUSTOMER STATEMENT

January signals the beginning of a new year, and a time to gather financial records and starting thinking about filling out a 1040. Producers who have signed up for a USDA eAuthentication Level 2 account will have a little online help in that they 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 program; information on farm loans; and conservations plan and land unit information.

MAINTAINING GRAIN QUALITY

This year's bumper grain crop has its obvious up side, but there is a downside too. Many producers are hard pressed to find adequate storage for every bushel harvested. Before giving in to the temptation to overfill storage bins, producers should think about the problems that can result. Overfilling storage bins can result in spoiled grain. Bins are meant to hold a level volume of grain. When bins overfilled and grain is heaped up, airflow is hindered and the chance of spoilage increases. Producers who take out marketing assistance loans and use the farm-stored grain as collateral should remember that they are responsible for maintaining the quality of the commodity for the term of the loan.

JOHANNIS UNVEILS 2007 FARM BILL PROPOSALS

Washington, Jan. 31, 2007 – Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns today unveiled the U.S. Department of Agriculture's 2007 farm bill proposals. The more than 65 proposals correspond to the 2002 farm bill titles with additional special focus areas, including specialty crops, beginning farmers and ranchers, and socially disadvantaged producers.

"We listened closely to producers and stakeholders all across the country and took a reform-minded and fiscally responsible approach to making farm policy more equitable, predictable and protected from challenge," said Johanns. "We started with the 2002 farm bill and propose to improve it by bolstering support for emerging priorities and focusing on a market-oriented approach."

USDA began preparations for the 2007 farm bill in 2005 by conducting 52 Farm Bill Forums across the country. More than 4,000 comments were recorded or collected during forums and via electronic and standard mail. These comments are summarized in 41 theme papers. USDA economists, led by Dr. Keith Collins, studied the comments and authored five analysis papers.

The proposals unveiled today represent the final phase of a nearly two year process. Each detailed proposal provides information about why a change is needed, the recommended solution, and relevant background information about the impacted program or policy.

The Administration's 2007 farm bill proposals would spend approximately \$10 billion less than the 2002 farm bill spent over the past five years (excluding ad-hoc disaster assistance), upholding the President's plan to eliminate the deficit in five years. These proposals would provide approximately \$5 billion more than the projected spending if the 2002 farm bill were extended.

The proposals are available at www.usda.gov/farmbill. Also posted on USDA's website are the Farm Bill Forum transcripts, farm bill comments submitted by the public, theme papers summarizing the comments and USDA analysis papers.

United States Department of Agriculture
 Farm Service Agency
 Sonoma-Marin County FSA Office
 1301 Redwood Way, Ste. 190
 Petaluma, CA 94954



HAPPY VALENTINES DAY

Dates to Remember	
Feb 19 th	George Washington's Birthday Holiday
March 1 st	All Other Annuals (Vegetables)

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