

Connecticut State FSA Committee Meeting Minutes

Regular Session

December 11, 2013

I. CALL TO ORDER

STC Chair Vincent Malerba called the Connecticut State FSA Committee meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. on Wednesday, December 11, 2013 at the Connecticut State Office in Tolland.

The following were present:

Vincent Malerba	-	Chairman, STC
Gary Crump	-	Member STC
Edward Kasheta Jr.	-	Member STC
Bryan Hurlburt	-	State Executive Director
Devon Marsden	-	Program Specialist
Doris Ostrowski	-	Administrative Officer
Randy Kleiner	-	Farm Loan Chief
Diane Holowaty	-	Administrative Specialist
Rebecca Palmer	-	County Office Trainee

II. ACTION ITEMS

A. Minutes of Previous Meetings

The minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed. Mr. Crump moved to accept the September 17th Regular Session minutes as written, Mr. Kasheta seconded, motion passed.

B. Mollusk Mortality Rate

Connecticut joined other Northeast states to appeal the national pricing for mollusks.

On November 20th, DAFP agreed to allow our states to use the submitted rates once the STO adopted them. The STO will be responsible for documenting "market prices and natural mortality rates that more accurately represent mollusk prices received from reliable and verifiable sources in coastal states".

Connecticut only has one clam producer but he chose not to renew his NAP policy this year.

Mr. Kasheta motioned to adopt the Mollusk Mortality Rate as submitted. Mr. Crump seconded, the motion passed.

C. Apple Yield

RMA wants our transitional yields revised. The proposed T-Yield is 260 bushels per acre for irrigated and non-irrigated.

Woodstock Orchards, Lyman Orchards and Crop Growers Insurance all support the increase.

Mr. Kasheta motioned to adopt the new proposed T-yields for Connecticut, Mr. Crump seconded and motion passed.

III. RECESSED TO EXECUTIVE SESSION – 10:25 a.m.

IV. REGULAR SESSION RECONVENED – 11:52 a.m.

V. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Staff Updates

SED Hurlburt wants to use this STC meeting model for County offices to conduct their COC meetings. Keeping the same format with Action Items and Discussion Items.

Performance Reviews – All completed, late but without concern from WDC.

Hiring Priorities sent to WDC:

- Windham County PT
- New London County FL/FP PT
- Windsor FLO
- New London FLOT
- STO PS/DD
- STO OS
- Six Temp PTs – one for each office.

Torrington – Carolyn Tomczyk is now Acting CED for Litchfield/Fairfield County. AO Ostrowski and AS Holowaty have been going to Torrington to assist. DCP issues – no payments have been made and crop reports were not certified. AS Holowaty corrected and certified the majority of the acreage reports. Thirty producers still do not have acreage reports; Ms. Tomczyk met with the COC and explain that these need to be done due to pending DCP payments.

PS Marsden and AS Holowaty will be reviewing the acreage reports and DCP contracts to ensure all are eligible for payment.

STO is working on training, based on errors found in the field, through our weekly conference calls. NAP training is coming with the County Operations Reviewer as trainer.

B. 2013 Payment by County

PowerPoint spreadsheets were discussed for all programs administered through the county offices. (See PowerPoint)

C. EFRP

CED McCard has been very instrumental in getting the EFRP program off the ground in CT. She has taken the lead as a resource person for all the counties.

D. COC Ballot Issues

Ballots were printed incorrectly and had to be reissued. New ballots will be mailed out December 20th. January 17th is the Election date and ballots will be counted the week of January 20th.

E. Source Water Protection Plan

This is the first time that FSA is grant administrator for the Source Water Protection Plan. We will be hands on with the Rural Water Source Protection Plan.

F. Adjusted Gross Income Update

NRCS identified an AGI problem where many people were ineligible. Training was conducted so that we will all follow procedure. NRCS has been very helpful in Torrington by getting producers to come in to complete the AGI form. NRCS was sending out the old AGI form and they were being rejected by IRS. PS Marsden completed the 2009 through 2011 AGIs. Counties will be doing the 2012 and forward.

G. Plums

Plum prices in the Crop Table were carried over in hundredweight, which is incorrect. STO asked WDC to change it to .90/pound wholesale. WDC came back and said that price was too high and took it out of the system which caused an overpayment in Windham County. PS Marsden did her homework researching the price and .90 is accurate, this price reflects the local market. We have lost customers over this. Mr. Crump agrees that the price is accurate. Prices should reflect prices in this area.

H. Farm Loan Program Update

- 24 Direct Loans totaling \$828,870
- 8 Guaranteed Loans totaling \$2,461,00
- 11 MicroLoans (mostly new customers)

We have no backlog at this time. Notice FLP-626 regarding women and Hispanics related loans was reviewed. Connecticut has twenty-six potential claimants filed.

Direct Operating funds are available in all operating categories. FLM Clark is doing an out of state loan for Massachusetts, because the applicant is a relative of the District Director.

Direct Farm Ownership funds are gone, except for the socially disadvantaged. Guaranteed Operating funds are still available. Connecticut has a strong Guaranteed Loan program. Farm repair loans are available for Beginning Farmers.

Emergency Loans – no designations at this time and nothing is allocated. SED tried to get a designation for the rains in June. Only crops to qualify would have been green beans in Hartford County but the producer replanted and that ended that.

Farm Loan Reports by County:

- Fairfield – one Youth Loan
- Hartford - 4 Operating Loans & 2 Guaranteed Loans.
- Litchfield – 3 Youth Loans
- Middlesex – one Operating Loan
- New Haven – one Guaranteed Loan
- New London – 7 Direct Operating Loans & 2 Guaranteed Loans.
- Tolland – 2 Direct Operating Loans, one Guaranteed Loans & one Farm Ownership Loan.
- Windham – 6 Direct Operating Loans & 2 Guaranteed Loans.

Loan Rates have been great – 2% for Operating Loans; 1.875% for MicroLoans; and 4.5% for Farm Operating Loans.

On December 17th there will be a meeting with the Farm Loan staff to review updated regulations.

Conservation Contract Program – Must be a farm loan direct customer. Can apply for a minimum of 10 acres for 10, 20 or 50 years. The land is set aside for wildlife.

Last month there was a Tri-State Loan Training with Carrie Novak on how to better service producers.

USDA is pushing to do a Veterans Loan; Connecticut would be a perfect place to be a pilot for the program.

Goals in violation:

- First year delinquency (11.1% v. a goal of 8.9%)
- Lending to Beginning Farmers (25% v. 28.8%)
- Guaranteed Delinquency Rate (7.94% v. 2%)

I. Outreach Efforts

- Farm Credit East Customer Appreciation luncheon
- Listening session with RMA Administrator Willis
- COC Meeting attendance
- CT Farm Bureau Annual luncheon
- AgVocate Committee
- Atlantic States Rural Water Service Association
- Congresswoman Esty's staff
- Tracking nationwide SED Farm Bill OpEd efforts for DAFO
- Met with Commissioner of Ag, State Conservationist, and ED of Farm Bureau to discuss areas of mutual interest.
- CT Forest and Parks Keynote Speaker
- CT Food System Alliance
- Rural Youth Loan Recipient
- Farm Energy Conference
- Farm Energy Booklet – first time FSA is included
- FSMA outreach
- Congressman Courtney Farm Tour
- Congressman Courtney Farm Bill Forum
- Farm Credit East Customer Appreciation dinner
- Fairvue Farms energy update
- Senator Murphy New & Beginning Farmer Roundtable

VI. WEATHER AND CROP CONDITIONS

Mr. Crump mentioned that we had a late October frost for two nights in a row. Weather has been cold. Had a great year, too much rain in June, overall a great year.

Mr. Malerba picked sweetcorn until October 25th. Great October for pumpkins,

Mr. Kasheta said the weather hampered the tobacco business. No tobacco in the valley has been sold, late being harvested, still hanging in the barns. Tobacco stems still too thick.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Crump moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Kasheta seconded, meeting was adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved:

Bryan Hurlburt
State Executive Director

Vincent R. Malerba
State Committee Chairman