

June 2008



MS FSA Producer News

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County Committee Elections “FSA Counts on You”

From **June 15 through Aug. 1**, farmers and ranchers can nominate eligible peers as candidates for election into all MS Farm Service Agency County Committees. Since COC elections happen only once a year, here is an election refresher. For election purposes, counties are divided into *local administrative areas*, or LAAs. Each LAA selects one producer to serve a three-year term on the Farm Service Agency county committee.

Each year, an election is held in an LAA to replace the committee member whose three-year term is expiring. In counties with three LAAs, one seat is up for election. In combined counties in some years, two seats may be up for election. Any eligible person residing in the selected 2008 LAA community who is interested in running for the County Committee, or would like to nominate an individual to run for the County Committee, must complete a nomination form. The nomination form for County FSA Committee Election (FSA-669A) is available at all FSA offices.

This is an important time for LAA communities, 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 manage tough financial times and natural disasters. Visit the County Committee Elections website to learn more about the County Committee Election process and read over the fact sheets at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=newsroom&subject=landing&topic=cce>.

Remember, the nomination period runs **June 15 through Aug. 1**. The completed nomination form must be returned to the county office by the close of business on Aug. 1, or postmarked by midnight Aug. 1, 2008. Voting takes place in the fall. Ballots will be mailed to eligible voters by Nov. 3. Dec. 1 is the last day to return voted ballots to the county office. Newly elected commit-

tee members and alternates take office Jan. 1, 2009.

Sign-up Deadline for LCP and LIP

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has announced that livestock producers have **until July 18, 2008**, to enroll in the 2005-2007 Livestock Compensation Program (LCP) and Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP). Sign-up began on Sept. 10, 2007, for the two programs that provide aid to livestock producers who suffered eligible livestock or livestock feed losses between Jan. 1, 2005, and Dec. 31, 2007, because of a natural disaster.

For more information, contact your local FSA office for program sign-up details.

Controlled Substances

Any person who is convicted under federal law of planting, producing, cultivating, harvesting, growing, or storing a controlled substance will be ineligible to participate and receive payments under USDA programs. Marijuana, opium poppies, and other drug producing plants are controlled substances.

What are some of the changes from the New 2008 Farm Bill? Visit the site online: www.usda.gov/farmbill

Mississippi's State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Sign-up Begins June 23, 2008

On March 22, 2007, FSA announced a new initiative, SAFE, to allow States to address local wildlife conservation needs. SAFE allows producers to install practices that benefit high priority State wildlife conservation objectives through the use of targeted restoration of vital habitat. Three proposals were developed.

SAFE signups will begin on June 23, 2008, and will continue until a project's acreage goal is met or Farm Bill authority for CRP expires, whichever comes first.

The three projects approved for Mississippi are: Black Bear, Quail and Black Belt Prairie.

Black Bear: This project will benefit the federally threatened Louisiana black and the state endangered American black bear by restoring native bottomland hardwood forests and wetland ecosystems in portions of the Mississippi Alluvial Valley that multiple conservation planning efforts have identified as important zones for black bear recovery. This is not a shallow water area practice for wildlife (duck pond). This project has an allocation of 7,950 acres

Quail: This project will increase native grassland habitats in 29 focal counties in Mississippi for restoration of northern bobwhite habitat and populations. This project has an allocation of 2,950 acres.

Black Belt Prairie: This project will restore the functions and values of the critically endangered habitat of the Black Belt Prairie in Mississippi with the goal of improving through restoration, native grassland habitats for rare, threatened, endangered, and declining species that are dependent on native prairie communities found within the Black Belt Prairie. This project has an allocation of 2,500 acres

For details on the eligible project areas and how to sign up, please come by the office.

Direct Farm Ownership and Farm Operating Loan Limits Changed

Effective immediately as a result of Section 5003 of the New Farm Bill, FSA's Direct Farm Ownership and Farm Operating loan amounts have been increased from \$200,000 to \$300,000. Contact your local loan officer for details.

Crop Disaster Program Sign-up Continues and Quality Sign-up to Begin Soon

Eligible farmers and producers who suffered crop loss damage between Jan. 1, 2005, and Dec. 31, 2007, can still apply to receive disaster assistance. FSA continues to accept applications and make payments for quantity losses under the Crop Disaster Program (CDP), for losses that occurred before the end of the 2007 calendar year.

Also, sign-up for quality losses under the CDP will begin soon at the county office. For quality losses, producers must apply for quantity loss to be eligible to apply for a quality loss. However, producers do not need to qualify for a quantity loss. In addition, the requirement for Crop Insurance or NAP coverage still applies. Quality loss participants will be required to provide actual production evidence. The actual production evidence will need to show the quantity, price AND quality factors.

Stored and fed production must have a quality test indicating quality and quantity by January 1 of the year following harvest. For stored production, the price is determined using the local market conditions in effect on the date the production evidence is submitted. For fed production, the value is determined using the local market conditions in effect on the crop's final harvest date. The commodity must have suffered at least a 25% reduction in value to meet the Economic Loss Minimum. The National FSA office is developing a software program to determine whether the producer meets the Economic Loss Minimum.

For more disaster program information go online at: <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov> or visit your local FSA office.

Removing CCC Loan Collateral

Producers are reminded, if you have grain under Commodity Credit Corporation loan it cannot be removed or disposed of without prior county office staff authorization or repayment. The county office staff may issue release authorizations based on a telephone or in person request when you are ready to move the grain. A loan violation is subject to monetary and administrative penalties, such as repaying the loan at principal plus interest, liquidated damages, calling the loan and denial of future farm-stored loans and loan deficiency payments.

All commodity loans are subject to spot check. Locking in a market loan repayment rate is not a marketing authorization. If you are planning to move CCC loan grain, call the county office staff, before you HAUL!

Final Acreage Reporting Dates Extended

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.

The certification form FSA-578, Report of Acreage, must account for all cropland on a farm, whether idle or planted.

Conservation Reserve Program acreage must be reported to receive annual rental payments. Crop acreage for the Noninsured Crop Disaster Program (NAP), must also be reported. For 2008, the final crop reporting dates are being extended to **August 15, 2008**. Late fees will not be applied if acreage reports are filed by **August 15** and all other crop reporting requirements have been met. This included prevented planting or failed acreage reporting.

For NAP purposes, producers are required to file an acreage report on the earlier of the extended acreage reporting date or no later than 15 calendar days before the onset of harvest or grazing.

Contact your county office for more information.

FSA Signature Policy

Using the correct signature when doing business with FSA can save time and prevent a delay in program benefits. The following are FSA signature guidelines:

- A married woman shall sign her given name: Mrs. Mary Doe, not Mrs. John Doe
- For a minor, FSA requires the minor's signature and one from an eligible parent
- Note, by signing the applicable document, the parent is liable for actions of the minor and may be liable for refunds, liquidated damages, etc
- When signing on one's behalf the signature must agree with the name typed or printed on the form, or be a variation that does not cause the name and signature to be in disagreement. Example - John W. Smith is on the form. The signature may be John W. Smith or J.W. Smith or J. Smith. Or Mary J. Smith may be signed as Mrs. Mary Joe Smith, M.J. Smith, Mary Smith, etc
- FAXED signatures will be accepted for certain forms and other documents provided the acceptable program forms are approved for FAXED signatures. Producers are responsible for the successful transmission and receipt of FAXED information.

- Promissory note
- Assignment of payment
- Joint payment authorization
- NAP actual production history and approved yield record
- Acknowledgement of commodity certificate purchase
- Financing statement
- UCC financing statement

Note: check to find out if signature is acceptable on a **FAXED form**.

- Spouses may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and CCC programs in which either has an interest, unless written notification denying a spouse this authority has been provided to the county office
- Spouses shall not sign on behalf of each other as an authorized signatory for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations, or other similar entities
- All members of a general partnership must sign for the general partnership unless an individual is authorized to act on the behalf of the general partnership and bind all members
- Spouses may sign on behalf of each other's individual interest in a partnership, unless notification denying a spouse that authority is provided to the county office
- Acceptable signatures for general partnerships, joint ventures, corporations, estates, and trusts shall consist of an indicator "by" or "for" the individual's name, individual's name and capacity, or individual's name, capacity, and name of entity.

For additional clarification on proper signatures contact your local FSA office.

Selected Interest Rates for June 2008

90-Day Treasury Bill	1.250%
Farm Operating Loans — Direct	3.125%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct	4.875%
Farm Ownership Loans — Beginning Farmer Down Payment	1.500%
Emergency Loans	3.750%
Farm Storage Facility Loans	3.375%
Commodity Loans 1996-Present	3.000%

Examples of documents **not** approved for FAXED signatures include:

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON BEGINNING FARMERS AND RANCHERS ISSUES ACCEPTED FOR USDA ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Written comments are being accepted through **July 3rd** for the USDA Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Advisory Committee Meeting. The USDA will hold public meetings July 9 and 10 in Washington, DC, to discuss issues affecting beginning farmers and ranchers. This meeting offers the public an opportunity to hear the committee's deliberations and to comment on issues affecting these farmers and ranchers. Both meetings, which will be held at the Sofitel Lafayette Square Hotel, 806 15th St., NW, will begin at 8 a.m., Eastern Daylight Time.

Oral comments will be accepted on July 9 beginning at 1:15 p.m. The opportunity to comment will be limited to five minutes each and will be approved on a first-come, first-served basis. Requests to make an oral statement must be in writing. They must include: the speaker's name, affiliation, and an outline of the topic. Requests can be sent via letter, fax or e-mail, **no later than July 3, 2008**, to: Mark Falcone - Designated Federal Official for the Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

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The Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers advises the Secretary of Agriculture on ways to encourage federal and state programs to provide joint financing to beginning farmers and ranchers as well as methods of maximizing new opportunities created through federal and state programs. Section 5 of the Agricultural Credit Improvement Act of 1992 required the Secretary of Agriculture to establish the committee. The committee meets at least once a year. Meetings are open to the public. For more information about the advisory committee, please visit: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>

Dates to Remember	
June 15	County Committee Nomination period begins.
June 23	SAFE Sign-up begins
July 4	Independence Day Holiday. FSA Offices Closed.
July 18	Deadline to sign-up for LCP and LIP.
Continues	Farm Storage Facility Loan Program.

Visit our website at: www.fsa.usda.gov/ms

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