

For: State and County Offices

**Crop Acreage Reporting System (CARS) Performance Issues and Requested Enhancements**

Approved by: Acting Deputy Administrator, Farm Programs



**1 Overview**

**A Background**

FSA released CARS, a web-based acreage reporting process, in October 2010 to replace the AS/400 acreage reporting system, beginning with the 2011 crop year. State Office specialists received training on CARS through Live Meeting and were expected to train County Office staff. Initially, field feedback on CARS usability and performance was positive. More recently, performance issues with CARS have been reported and a number of software enhancements have been requested.

PECD, ITSD, and OCIO, ITS are collaborating to improve CARS performance and usability. Reported software defects have been noted and software modifications are deployed to Field Offices as they are completed and tested. PECD and ITSD have been in contact with several counties in response to problem reports. ITSD is working with these counties to analyze the cause and to deliver software changes as rapidly as possible. In addition, PECD is reviewing feedback provided by other counties to capture pain points to improve the process.

**B Purpose**

This notice:

- addresses reported CARS performance issues
- provides a list of requested CARS enhancements.

<b>Disposal Date</b>	<b>Distribution</b>
May 1, 2011	State Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices

## Notice CP-672

### 2 CARS Performance Issues

#### A PDF Document Printing

Some County Office staff is experiencing issues with CARS printing. FSA is working with USDA's OCIO, ITS, to determine a root cause of the problem. Information Bulletin 5396 was published December 21, 2010, with a work around to allow printing for these users until a permanent fix is developed.

#### B Refresh of "Report of Acreage Screen"

County Office staff expressed concerns that screen refresh caused the page to "jump around". Software was deployed and Information Bulletin 5394 was published in December 2010 to modify the Report of Acreage Screen, so the dependent drop-down boxes function without the page moving around. Additional refresh issues have been reported. ITSD is working to resolve these issues.

#### C Slow Screen Response and System Errors

County Offices are experiencing issues, such as "system errors", slow screen response time, and eAuthentication login problems. ITSD determined that CARS was improperly configured, limiting the number of users that could concurrently access CARS. This issue was resolved on December 10, 2010. This helped CARS screen response times. However, further reports of slow performance and system errors are being researched. ITSD and OCIO, ITS are working with a few County Offices to do an in-depth investigation of all possible problem areas, including equipment and network. If users are experiencing slowness with CARS, users should close all other applications on their PC. In some offices, performance of CARS may be impacted by other high bandwidth activities, such as video streaming, such as Live Meeting training or transferring large files. If users are experiencing page response times of more than 5 seconds for multiple screens, contact the Help Desk.

**Notice CP-672**

**3 CARS Enhancements**

**A Slow Processing Time**

County Office staff has expressed concerns with the lengthy acreage load process and have requested several CARS enhancements to improve the dataload process. Some of the more frequently requested enhancements include State/county crop defaults, copying data across tracts, and easy access to certification and printing. PECD has reviewed and prioritized these enhancements for release to production.

**B Other Enhancements**

The following is a list of requested other software enhancements that has been requested. These enhancements will be considered as future releases of CARS software are deployed.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Requested CARS Enhancements</b>
Additional Data Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add place to record continuous cropped crops.</li> <li>• Add a miscellaneous field to capture/track various information, such as No Till (NT), WC violations, late planted, etc.</li> </ul>
Additional Functionality	Capability to change the tract number without having to delete the current reports and re-enter, because when you enter the wrong tract number, the user has to delete the wrong tract information and re-enter the tract information under the correct tract number.
Button Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add “Cancel” button on Revised Acreage Screen.</li> <li>• Add “Cancel” and “Back” buttons to all screens (will be helpful when taking a wrong option or entering incorrect data).</li> <li>• Add “Today” button by the “Calendar” button to automatically populate the current day’s date.</li> <li>• Add a button on the Tract Summary Screen to go directly into loading that tract.</li> <li>• Add “Certify” button on the Crop Review Screen.</li> </ul>
Calculate and Display	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Automatically calculate and populate “age of trees” based on planting date (system should add 1 year per CDP procedure; year of planting counts as year 1).</li> <li>• Add “Acreage Totaling” block, similar to the “Balance” feature on a checking account, at the top of the CARS Screen that continuously tallies acreage of all the fields entered.</li> <li>• Add “Total Cropland Acres” semi transparent popup box that keeps a running total of cropland acres for the farm as tracts/fields are reported. As the user scrolls, this pop up box would scroll as well and always stay in the view screen.</li> </ul>

Notice CP-672

3 CARS Enhancements (Continued)

B Requested Enhancements (Continued)

Item	Requested CARS Enhancements
Defaults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always show the last entry by default (because of being interrupted during the load process or re-accessing application after exiting the system).</li> <li>• Default planting pattern of orchard for fruit crop, such as cherries, apples, and pears.</li> <li>• Add quick links for crops, similar to tabs on an Excel workbook. Have a tab for each of the crops reported on FSA-578. If the tab is clicked, all of the entries for that crop will come to the top of the page area in numeric order by field.</li> <li>• Default “Crop Status” to “I” (initial) with option to change.</li> <li>• Default “Supplemental Status” to “Planted” with option to change.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> Exception crops will automatically default to “Not Planted” with option to change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When selecting county for reporting, allow CARS to default to administered counties <b>only</b>, not all counties for the State.</li> <li>• Default county listing to administrative counties first and then all others after.</li> <li>• When selecting “Reports”, automatically default individual FSA-578 to the current FSN and the producer print to current producer.</li> </ul>
Cropland Indicator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Default to a blank and require an entering “Y” or “N”.</li> <li>• Display indicator when reviewing fields.</li> <li>• Allow review of the cropland flags before printing FSA-578.</li> </ul>
Crop Status Description	Modify crop status descriptions to exactly match descriptions in 2-CP.
Cursor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When an error message indicates a box needs to be filled, have the cursor go directly to that box.</li> <li>• On the Search Screen; when searching by farm automatically, default the cursor in the box to type the farm number.</li> </ul>
Farm Records	Add link under the left CARS Menu to access farm records and add producers that will automatically update.
Manual FSA-578	Provide new/updated FSA-578.

**Notice CP-672**

**3 CARS Enhancements (Continued)**

**B Requested Enhancements (Continued)**

Item	Requested CARS Enhancements
Messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add the message, “All cropland has not been reported/certified”, when certifying less than the cropland on the farm.</li> <li>• Add the message, “Farm does not have a history of FAV”, when reporting farms with FAV.</li> </ul>
Planting Date	Change the “Plant Date” format to accept “110510” (like Subsidiary Files), instead of “11/05/2010”.
Print (FSA-578 and Producer Print)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add option to print FSA-578 in portrait orientation.</li> <li>• Add “by” to signature line on FSA-578 (this has been done on other program contracts, etc).</li> <li>• Include the “End Date” on FSA-578 print.</li> <li>• Add “Report” and “Print” options on the Acreage Reporting Screen (CARS115).</li> <li>• Default option to print the most recent producer loaded.</li> <li>• Provide “Producer Print” that is crop specific and totaled for each farm.</li> <li>• When a page overflows to another page, column headings and farm/tract number information should be displayed.</li> <li>• Print additional elements now captured in CARS (NAP unit, skip-row information, orchard information, planting period, etc).</li> <li>• Add the message, “All active tracts or all cropland on active tracts has not been reported” (the System 36 printout on acreage report displayed this warning).</li> <li>• Include crop acreage summary totals on the producer print.</li> <li>• Add a blanket statement to FSA 578 that states, “For NAP participants: I certify that I have reported all crops planted; any crop that I have purchased NAP coverage for, but have not reported, is a zero acre report.” (Zero Acreage Reports for NAP are very time-consuming for FSA staff. This causes a great deal of work in the County Office).</li> </ul>
Producer Signature	if there are multiple producers with crops, then the summary report could have multiple places for producer signature
Repeat Delete	Allow for deleting multiple crops at 1 time.

**Notice CP-672**

**3 CARS Enhancements (Continued)**

**B Requested Enhancements (Continued)**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Requested CARS Enhancements</b>
Status Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Print the total acreage by crop/by farm number, when acreage reporting is complete.</li> <li>• Add a “Farms With an End Date” report.</li> <li>• Allow the DCP Contract and Unreported Cropland Status Report to display inactive/unapproved DCP contracts and unreported cropland to indicate potential late-filed issues.</li> <li>• Add more reports to display a county’s total acres of crops reported or other reports that need Kansas City assistance to extract.</li> <li>• Add a “Farms With FSA-578 on File” report.</li> </ul>
Screen Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On the Reporting Screen, move the “Acreage” drop-down menu closer to field and the “Crop” drop-down menu after the field number.</li> <li>• Display all entry fields on 1 screen to eliminate the need to scroll.</li> </ul>
Screen Refresh	Fix delay issues after typing/selecting entries on the Add Crop Screen.
Shares	Have shares preloaded from previous year.
Signature Date	Automatically default to current date when entering/changing data.

**4 Action**

**A State Office Action**

State Offices shall inform County Offices of the contents of this notice.

**B County Office Action**

This notice is for informational purposes only. No action is required.