

April 2014



Bay County FSA Updates

- [USDA ENCOURAGES EARLY REGISTRATION FOR FSA PROGRAMS](#)
 - [NEW FARM BILL OFFERS INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRODUCERS](#)
 - [2013 ACRE](#)
 - [RETIREMENT ANNOUNCEMENT](#)
 - [USDA SETS DATE FOR SOYBEAN REQUEST FOR REFERENDUM](#)
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**Next County Committee
Meeting**
June 18, 2014 @ 9:00 a.m.

USDA Encourages Early Registration for FSA Programs

USDA recommends that farmers and ranchers register in advance for FSA programs in order to improve the sign-up process and expedite implementation of programs. Producers are encouraged to report farm records and business structure changes to a [local FSA Service Center](#) now. Examples of updates or changes to report include:

- New producers or producers who have not reported farm records to FSA.
- Producers, who have recently bought, sold or rented land. Those producers need to ensure that changes have been reported and properly recorded by local FSA county office personnel. Reports of purchased or sold property should include a copy of the land deed, and if land has been leased, then documentation should be provided that indicates the producer had/has control of the acreage.
- Producers that have changed business structures (e.g. formed a partnership or LLC) need to ensure that these relationships and shares are properly recorded with FSA. Even family farms that have records on file may want to ensure that this is recorded accurately as it may impact payment limits.

Farm records can be updated during business hours at FSA Service Centers that administer the county where the farm or ranch is located. Producers can contact their local FSA Service Center in advance to find out what paperwork they may need. In addition, bank account information should be supplied or updated if necessary to ensure that producers receive payments as quickly as possible through direct deposit.

For further information about our disaster programs and USDA's Farm Bill implementation plan, visit FSA's [2014 Farm Bill Web page](#). FSA Service Center locations can be found on the [FSA website](#).

New Farm Bill Offers Increased Opportunities for Producers

The 2014 Farm Bill offers increased opportunities for producers including farm loan program modifications that create flexibility for new and existing farmers. A fact sheet outlining modifications to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) Farm Loan Programs is available [here](#).

The Farm Bill expands lending opportunities for thousands of farmers and ranchers to begin and continue operations, including greater flexibility in determining eligibility, raising loan limits, and emphasizing beginning and socially disadvantaged producers.

Changes that will take effect immediately include:

- Elimination of loan term limits for guaranteed operating loans.
- Modification of the definition of beginning farmer, using the average farm size for the county as a qualifier instead of the median farm size.
- Modification of the Joint Financing Direct Farm Ownership Interest Rate to 2 percent less than regular Direct Farm Ownership rate, with a floor of 2.5 percent. Previously, the rate was established at 5 percent.
- Increase of the maximum loan amount for Direct Farm Ownership down payments from \$225,000 to \$300,000.
- Elimination of rural residency requirement for Youth Loans, allowing urban youth to benefit.
- Debt forgiveness on Youth Loans, which will not prevent borrowers from obtaining additional loans from the federal government.
- Increase of the guarantee amount on Conservation Loans from 75 to 80 percent and 90 percent for socially disadvantaged borrowers and beginning farmers.
- Microloans will not count toward loan term limits for veterans and beginning farmers.

Additional modifications must be implemented through the rulemaking processes. Visit the [FSA Farm Bill website](#) for detailed information and updates to farm loan programs.

2013 ACRE

Participation in 2013 ACRE requires production reports for planted acres that must be submitted for the covered commodities and peanuts planted on the farm by July 15, 2014. Failure to report production for those covered commodities and peanuts planted on ACRE farms may result in contract termination. If the contract is terminated, all payments, including direct payments previously received plus interest will be required to be refunded.

Retirement Announcement

After 37 years of dedicated service to the Agency, and to the Producers of Bay County, our Donna Jacobs is retiring. So if you are in the area, between now and the end of May stop by the office and wish Donna well in her new chapter in life. An open house is being planned for May 14th, 2014 from 12-3 p.m. at the Bay County FSA office in her honor. All are invited.

USDA Sets Date for Soybean Request for Referendum

USDA will offer soybean producers the opportunity to request a referendum on the Soybean Promotion and Research Order (Order), as authorized under the Soybean Promotion, Research, and Consumer Information Act (Act).

Soybean producers who are interested in having a referendum to determine whether to continue the Soybean Checkoff Program are invited to participate. To be eligible to participate, producers must certify and provide documentation that shows that they produced soybeans and paid an assessment on the soybeans during the period of Jan. 1, 2012, through Dec. 31, 2013.

Producers may obtain a form by mail, fax, or in person from FSA county offices starting on May 5, 2014 through May 30, 2014. Forms are also available on the [AMS website](#). Producers who don't participate in FSA programs can still request a referendum at the FSA county office where they own or rent land.

Completed forms and supporting documentation must be returned to the appropriate FSA county office by fax or in person no later than close of business May 30, 2014. If returned by mail, it must be postmarked by midnight May 30, 2014, and received in the office by close of business on June 5, 2014.

Notice of the Request for Referendum will be published in the March 4, 2014, Federal Register. For more information, visit the [AMS website](#) or contact James Brow, Research and Promotions Branch; Livestock, Poultry and Seed Program, AMS, USDA; STOP 0251 - Room 2610-S; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, D.C. 20250-0251; tel. (202) 720-0633.

Farm Safety

Flowing grain in a storage bin or gravity-flow wagon can be fatal. It takes less than five seconds for a person caught in flowing grain to be trapped.

The mechanical aspects of grain handling equipment, also presents a real danger. Augers, power take offs, and other moving parts can grab people or clothing.

These hazards, along with pinch points and missing shields, are dangerous enough for adults; not to mention children. It is always advisable to keep children a safe distance from operating farm equipment. Always use extra caution when backing or maneuvering farm machinery. Ensure everyone is visibly clear and accounted for before machinery is engaged.

FSA wants all farmers to have a productive crop year, and that begins with putting safety first.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).