

April 2014



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Lenawee County FSA Updates

Lenawee County FSA Office

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Adrian, MI 49221
Phone: 517-263-7400
Fax: 855-643-5267

County Executive Director:
Constance Reid Guffey

Program Technicians:
Debra Shiels ext. 105
Jessica Mullins ext. 125
Barbara Wagner ext. 107
Beth Wagner ext. 106
Jamie Wegner ext. 104

County Committee Members:
Michael Feight - Chair
Dale Terry - Vice Chair
Genie Hillard - Member
Stephanie Thompson - Advisor

Farm Loan Manager:
Michael Jordon

Program Technicians:
Brenda Andrews ext. 113
Jodie Johnson ext. 112

Next County Committee Meeting: April 24 at 8:00 am

SAVE TIME – MAKE AN APPOINTMENT WITH FSA

As we roll out the Farm Bill programs administered by FSA, there will be related signups and in some cases multiple management decisions that need to be made by producers, in consultation with FSA staff. To insure maximum use of your time and to insure that you are afforded our full attention to your important business needs, please call our office ahead of your visit to set an appointment and to discuss any records or documentation that you may need to have with you when you arrive for your appointment. For the Adrian Service Center please call 517-263-7400 and press extension 106. For other FSA Service Center contact information, please visit: <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>.

FSA OFFERS FARM BILL WEBSITE AND ONLINE OVERVIEW OF FARM BILL PROGRAMS

The Agricultural Act of 2014 (the Act), also known as the 2014 Farm Bill, was signed by President Obama on February 7, 2014. The Act repeals certain programs, continues some programs with modifications, and authorizes several new programs administered by FSA. Most of these programs are authorized and funded through 2018.

For the latest on 2014 Farm Bill programs administered by FSA, please visit our Farm Bill website at www.fsa.usda.gov/farmbill and for an FSA program overview please read, download and/or print our recently posted FSA Farm Bill Fact Sheet titled, [What's in the 2014 Farm Bill for Farm Service Agency Customers?](#)

For more information on FSA, please contact your local USDA Service Center or visit us online at www.fsa.usda.gov.

NEW FARM BILL PROVIDES PERMANENT LIVESTOCK DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

The 2014 Farm Bill makes several disaster programs permanent programs and provides retroactive authority to cover eligible losses back to October 1, 2011. USDA is determined to make implementing the disaster programs a top priority. Program enrollment begins April 15, 2014.

Emergency Assistance for Livestock (ELAP) provides compensation to producers who suffered livestock, honeybee, or farm-raised fish death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather, disease, or other conditions.

Producers should collect all pertinent information of natural disaster consequences, including:

- Documentation of the number and kind of livestock that have died, supplemented if possible by photographs or video records of ownership and losses
- Dates of death supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts

The Tree Assistance Program (TAP) provides financial assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines damaged by natural disasters. TAP applicants must meet AGI rules and conservation compliance rules. Crop certifications are required. Late certifications may be accepted without a late fee for years 2011, 2012 and 2013, but not for 2015. Field visits to verify losses are required to be done by FSA personnel.

Producers who suffered livestock, tree, bush or vine losses in excess of normal mortality for a fiscal year (October-September) 2011, 2012 or 2013 should contact the office. ELAP and TAP fact sheets are available online at www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA. After gathering records and analyzing them, please give us a call at 517-263-7400 extension 106 if you feel you may qualify for either of these programs.

STEPHANIE THOMPSON APPOINTED AS COUNTY COMMITTEE ADVISOR

FSA County Committee (COC) Advisors are a valued voice for underrepresented groups and socially disadvantaged farmers. Stephanie Thompson of Blissfield has been appointed as COC Advisor until 2/28/15.

Duties and Responsibilities of COC Advisors include:

- attending each COC meeting, including executive sessions
- participating in all deliberations
- increasing awareness of and participation in FSA activities, including elections, by eligible voters to ensure that socially disadvantaged group problems and viewpoints are understood and considered
- helping to develop interest in socially disadvantaged group members for considering a career with FSA
- actively soliciting candidates from socially disadvantaged groups for COC election nominations

EARLY REGISTRATION FOR FSA PROGRAMS – REPORT CHANGES NOW

We recommend that producers 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 before April 15, 2014.

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 FSA county office personnel. Reports of purchased or sold property should include a copy of the recorded land deed, and if land has been leased, then documentation should be provided that indicates the producer has control of the acreage, including a lease ending date.
- 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.
- Bank account information for direct deposit of payments.

USDA ANNOUNCES THE EXTENSION OF THE MILK INCOME LOSS CONTRACT PROGRAM FOR 2014

The Farm Bill has extended the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) program which protects dairy farmers against income loss through September 1, 2014, or until a new Margin Protection Program for dairy producers (MPP) is operational. Contracts for eligible producers enrolled in MILC are automatically extended. Dairy operations with approved MILC contracts will continue to receive monthly payments if a payment rate is in effect. Enrolled producers will receive a letter in a few days with additional information. New dairy operations may be eligible for this program and are encouraged to call the office now. Producers who want to select a different production start month must visit their local FSA office between April 14, 2014, and May 30, 2014.

ASKFSA - FSA'S SELF-SERVICE ASSISTANCE ANYTIME, ANYWHERE!

Are you looking for answers to your FSA questions? Then ASK FSA at askfsa.custhelp.com. AskFSA is an online resource that helps you easily find information and answers to your FSA questions no matter where you are or what device you use. It is for ALL customers, including underserved farmers and ranchers who wish to be enrolled in FSA loans, farm, and conservation programs.

Through AskFSA you can:

- Access our knowledge base 24/7
- Receive answers to your questions faster
- Submit a question and receive a timely response from an FSA expert
- Get notifications when answers important to you and your farming operation are updated
- Customize your account settings and view responses at any time

MICROLOAN PROGRAM

The Microloan (ML) program was developed to better serve the unique financial operating needs of beginning, niche and small family farm operations. FSA offers applicants a Microloan designed to help farmers with credit needs of \$35,000 or less. The loan features a streamlined application process built to fit the needs of new and smaller producers. This loan program will also be useful to specialty crop producers and operators of community supported agriculture (CSA). What is community-supported agriculture? It is a locally-based model of agriculture and food distribution where a group of individuals have pledged to support one or more local farms, and they share the risks and benefits of the food production. CSA members pay at the onset of the growing season for a share of the anticipated harvest and once harvesting begins, they receive weekly shares of vegetables, fruit, herbs, etc.

Eligible applicants can apply for a maximum amount of \$35,000 to pay for initial start-up expenses such as hoop houses to extend the growing season, essential tools, irrigation and annual expenses such as seed, fertilizer, utilities, land rents, marketing, and distribution expenses. As financing needs increase, applicants can apply for a regular operating loan up to the maximum amount of \$300,000 or obtain financing from a commercial lender under FSA's Guaranteed Loan Program.

Individuals who are interested in applying for a microloan or would like to discuss other farm loan programs available should call Jodie Johnson at 517-263-7400 extension 112 or Brenda Andrews at extension 113.

2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 AND 2013 AVERAGE ADJUSTED GROSS INCOME COMPLIANCE REVIEW

The AGI verification and compliance reviews for 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 are conducted on producers who the IRS indicates may have exceeded the adjusted gross income limitations described in [7 CFR 1400.500]. Based on this review, producers will receive determinations of eligibility or ineligibility.

If the producer is determined to have exceeded the AGI limitation of \$500,000 of nonfarm income, \$750,000 of farm income, \$1 million of conservation program benefits or the \$1 million total AGI, then receivables will be established for payments earned directly or indirectly by the producer subject to the applicable limitation. The Michigan FSA State Office will begin notifying producers selected for review next month. If you have any questions about the review process or determination, please contact the Michigan FSA State Office at 517-324-5107. Producers who receive initial debt notification letters may only appeal the amount of the debt to their local FSA office. Adverse determinations become administratively final if not timely appealed and can only be reopened if exceptional circumstances exist that prevented the producer from timely filing the appeal.

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).