



## FSA UPDATES

# Addison Agriculture



**Addison County FSA**  
68 Catamount Park  
Middlebury, VT 05753

Phone: (802) 388-6748

Fax: (802) 388-3709

[www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)

#### Hours

Monday - Friday

8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

#### County Committee

Thomas Audet,  
Phyllis Bowdish  
Curt Estey  
COC meets 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday  
of each month

#### County Executive Director

Craig Miner (EXT15)  
Craig.Miner@vt.usda.gov

#### Program Staff

Lisa Gaboriault, PT (X11)  
Billie Jo Forgues, PT (X10)

#### Farm Loan Manager

Gary Braman, FLM (x18)  
Gary.Braman@vt.usda.gov

#### Farm Loan Staff

David Girard, FLO (x20)  
Jill Thomas, FLO (x17)  
Mari Quesnel, PT (x28)

#### FSA E-Mail

If you are among the growing number of producers that have access to the Internet at home, and you are not presently receiving our newsletter by email, we encourage you to give us a call or email so that we may add you to our list. Email provides another tool for improved communications between our office and you – the customer

#### Ag Census Forms Due Feb 4th

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) began distribution of the 2007 Census of Agriculture last month and completed forms are due by February 4, 2008. Producers can return their forms by mail or, for the first time, they have the convenient option of filling out the Census online via a secure web site at

[www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov)

According to NASS, the Census of Agriculture provides important information that is not available elsewhere. The last Ag Census was conducted in 2002.

#### County Committee Election Results

Congratulations to Tom Audet. Tom was elected to represent farmers from LAA #3, which represents the towns of Bridport, Goshen, Leicester, Orwell, Salisbury, Shoreham, and Whiting on the county committee. Tom was elected to his 2nd consecutive term. Andrea Ochs and Joseph Hescocock were elected as first and second alternate, respectively. FSA appreciates all of the voters for taking the time to complete the election ballot. The county committee system works only because of your participation.

The committee members held their organizational meeting and have elected Tom Audet to serve as the county committee chairman and Phyllis Bowdish to serve as the vice-chairman. Curt Estey continues to serve as regular member.

#### Foreign Investors Notification

The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act requires all foreign owners of U.S. agricultural land to report their holdings to the Secretary of Agriculture. The Farm Service Agency administers this program for USDA.

Foreign persons who have purchased or sold agricultural land in the county are required to report the transaction to FSA with 90 days of the closing. Failure to submit the AFIDA form could result in civil penalties of up to 25 percent of the fair market value of the property. County government offices, Realtors, attorneys and others involved in real estate transactions are reminded to notify foreign investors of these reporting requirements.

#### Controlled Substance

Any person who is convicted under federal or state law of a controlled substance violation could be ineligible for USDA payments or benefits. Violations include planting, harvesting or growing a prohibited plant.

#### Power of Attorney

If you're too busy getting work done around the farm to come into your local FSA office to conduct business and complete your paperwork, here's a solution. Retain an agent to act on your behalf for programs and transactions authorized under the 2002 Farm Bill and most other FSA administered programs. This can be done by completing an FSA-211, Power of Attorney. The form is available at your local USDA Service Center or on-line at <http://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov>. Forms obtained and completed outside USDA Service Center offices must be notarized. To find out more, call the office.

#### Special Accommodations

Special accommodations will be made upon request for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment or hearing impairment. If accommodations are required, individuals should contact the county FSA office directly or by phone.

#### Loans for Socially Disadvantaged

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) can make and guarantee loans to socially disadvantaged applicants to buy and operate family size farms and ranches. Funds specifically for these loans are reserved each year. A socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of the group without regard to their individual qualities. For purposes of this program, socially disadvantaged groups are women, African Americans, American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, and Asians and Pacific Islanders.

#### Appeal Process

After an FSA official makes a decision on your request for USDA services or application, you will be sent a letter informing you of the decision and options you can pursue if you disagree.

Generally, program participants have three choices — an informal review with the original agency decision-maker, an opportunity for mediation and finally an appeal to the next level of authority within the agency.

#### Applications for FSA Loans

Farmers and ranchers that intend to apply to the Farm Service Agency for loan assistance for the upcoming crop year are encouraged to file their applications as early as possible. Filing early will help ensure that your loan is processed and approved as early as possible so that planting decisions can be made. Failure to apply early can result in a delay in processing loans due to the volume of applications that must be processed in date order. Contact our farm loan team for more details and assistance in applying.

#### Youth Loans

Remember FSA makes operating loans to individual rural youths age 10 through 20 to establish and operate income producing projects. These projects must be of modest size and be initiated, developed, carried out by rural youths participating in 4-H Clubs, FFA, or a similar organization or with a vocational teacher or county extension agent. The project must be an organized and supervised program of work. It must be planned and operated with the assistance of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan, and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. For further information, contact our loan officers -Jill Thomas or David Girard.



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its program and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

### **Spousal Signatures**

Husbands and wives may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and Commodity Credit Corporation programs in which either has an interest. This option is automatically available unless a written request for exclusion is made to the county office staff by either spouse.

### **Attention Producers, Landowners!**

*\*Do you intend to clear timber areas to create or to expand existing crop areas? \*Are you converting a pasture field into a crop field? \*Are there any areas on your farm(s) that you are considering cropping that have not been cropped in recent years? \*Is there a wet spot in a field that you want to drain to make cropping easier? \*Are you disturbing a wild-life habitat area of any type?*

*These are Highly Erodible and Wetlands provision questions that need to be considered each year by producers to assure that they may remain eligible for USDA benefits. Please contact your NRCS representative before you begin.*

### **There are Known 2008 Local Bank Changes \*\*\* See Below for Bank Account Changes**

Current policy mandates that FSA payments be electronically transferred into your bank account. Forms are available at the FSA office to sign up for direct deposit. In order to make timely payments, you need to notify the office if you close your account or if another financial institution purchases your bank. **It's very important that you realize you have the responsibility to notify FSA of any change to your direct deposit account.** Payments can be delayed if we are not aware of changes to your account and routing #'s.

### **Change in Farming Operations/Payment Limitation & Eligibility**

Producers need to update signature authorization and Farm Operating Plans For Payment Eligibility when there are any changes in the ownership/operating structure of their operation. USDA payments and benefits are subject to producer eligibility and limitation provisions as defined by law. Documents and forms to determine eligibility and limitations once completed are reviewed on an annual basis. It is the producer's responsibility to report changes in the farming operation which may affect payment eligibility and payment limitations. In addition, entities such as corporations, limited partnerships, trusts and estates are required to provide names, addresses, and ID numbers of their members.

### **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program \*\* March 15, 2008\*\***

Farmers are able to take advantage of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) by signing up until March 15, 2008. After that date, continuous sign up is still expected to be available, but there may be some delay if passage of the new farm bill is delayed or if the current bill is not extended. CREP will reimburse farmers for retiring cropland or pastureland adjacent to streams, ponds and rivers by establishing buffers. Program participants will receive annual rental payments, cost-share assistance, and other financial incentives for either 10, 15 or 30 year contracts for installing and maintaining forested riparian buffers or grass filter strips. Eligible cropland must have been *considered* row cropped 4 of the 6 years between 1996 and 2001. Pastures adjacent to waters do not carry this requirement. The buffers and filter strips are narrow in width so contract acreage is minimal, BUT, payments are substantial to provide attractive incentive. Annual rental payments vary from \$58/ac to \$206/ac and sign up bonuses vary from \$140/ac to \$2055/ac. For more information about CREP call 388-6748, ext 15 or stop by the FSA office.

### **Complaint Process**

Any person, class or group of persons may file a discrimination complaint within 180 days of an alleged discriminatory action. Complaints may be filed in writing or orally with the agency head, any designated agency official or the Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Assistance in filing a complaint can be obtained by calling or visiting any FSA office



### **Customer Statement**

January signals the beginning of a new year, and a time to gather financial records and start thinking about filling out a 1040. Producers who have signed up for a USDA eAuthentication Level 2 account will be able to access their farm data via their Customer Statement. The Customer Statement puts a range of USDA services and programs into a single report that's at your fingertips and available online, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It allows USDA customers to view their participation, application and payment status in various commodity and conservation programs; information on farm loans; and conservation plan and land unit information.