



NEWSLETTER



May 2012

Virginia State FSA Office

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More Information about Virginia FSA
programs, activities and news can be
found on the VA FSA Internet at
<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/va>

2012 FSA County Committee Elections

The election of agricultural producers to the Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees is important to all farmers and ranchers, whether beginning or long-established, large or small operation. It is crucial that every eligible producer participate in these elections because FSA county committees are a link between the agricultural community and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

County Committee (COC) members are a critical component of FSA operations. The intent is to have the COC reflect the makeup of the producers and to represent all constituents. This means wherever possible, minorities, women or lower income producers need to be on the committee to speak for these underrepresented groups.

County committees provide local input on:

- Commodity price support loans and payments
- Conservation programs
- Incentive, indemnity and disaster payments for some commodities
- Emergency programs
- Payment eligibility

FSA county committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws. County committee members apply their judgment and knowledge to make local decisions.

Election Period

June 15, 2012 - The nomination period begins.

Aug. 1, 2012 - Last day to file nomination forms (FSA-669A) at the local USDA Service Center.

Nov. 5, 2012 - Ballots mailed to eligible voters.

Dec. 3, 2012 - Last day to return voted ballots to the USDA Service Center.

Jan. 1, 2013 - Newly elected county committee members take office.

Who Can Hold Office:

To hold office as a county committee member, a person must meet the basic eligibility criteria:

- Participate or cooperate in a program administered by FSA
- Be eligible to vote in a county committee election
- Reside in the local administrative area (LAA) in which the person is a candidate

Not have been:

- Removed or disqualified from the office of county committee member, alternate or employee
- Removed for cause from any public office or have been convicted of fraud, larceny,

- embezzlement or any other felony
- Dishonorably discharged from any branch of the armed services

Nominations:

To become a nominee, eligible individuals must sign nomination form FSA-669A. The form includes a statement that the nominee agrees to serve if elected. This form is available at USDA Service Centers and online at http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/fsa0669a_commiteelectform.pdf

Nomination forms for the 2012 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA Service Center by close of business on Aug. 1, 2012.

Agricultural producers who participate or cooperate in an FSA program may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee. Individuals may nominate themselves or others as a candidate. Additionally, organizations representing minority and women farmers or ranchers may nominate candidates. Nomination forms are filed for the county committee of the office that administers a producer’s farm records.

Who Can Vote:

Agricultural producers of legal voting age may be eligible to vote if they participate or cooperate in any FSA program. A person who is not of legal voting age but supervises and conducts the farming operations of an entire farm also may be eligible to vote. More information about voting eligibility requirements can be found in the FSA fact sheet titled “FSA County Committee Election - Eligibility to Vote and Hold Office as a County Committee Member.” Producers may contact their local USDA Service Center for more information.

- The election of agricultural producers to Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees is important to ALL farmers and ranchers. It is crucial that every eligible producer participate in these elections because FSA county committees are a link between the agricultural community and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).
- County committee members are a critical component of the operations of FSA. They help deliver FSA farm programs at the local level. Farmers and ranchers who serve on county committees help with the decisions necessary to administer the programs in their counties. They work to ensure FSA agricultural programs serve the needs of local producers.
- FSA county committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws. County committee members apply their judgment and knowledge to make local decisions.
- The COC nomination period runs from June 15, 2012 through August 1, 2012. For more information just contact your local FSA office.

Crop Reporting

The annual, timely and accurate reporting of acres 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 Load Deficiency Payments.

Conservation Reserve Program acreage must be reported to receive annual rental payments. Crop acreage for all crops listed on the CCC-471 Application for Coverage for the Non-

Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) must also be reported.

Crop reports — form FSA-578, Report of Acreage — must account for all cropland on a farm, whether idle or planted. In Virginia there are three deadlines based on the crop. They are:

Thursday, May 31st	Fall & spring planted small grains
Monday, July 2nd	All 2012 planted crops except soybeans, tobacco, & grain sorghum
Monday, July 16th	Soybeans, tobacco, grain sorghum; hay, pasture &CRP/CREP

Prevented Planting:

Prevented planting needs to be reported no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date. If you report this acreage, it may be eligible for certain program payments. Unreported prevented planting will not be eligible

Failed Acreage:

Reports of failed acreage must be filed before disposition of the crop, and producers must be able to establish to the satisfaction of the county committee that the crop failed and was prevented from being replanted through the normal planting period because of natural disaster conditions.

If you report failed acreage, it may be eligible for certain program payments. Unreported acreage will not be eligible now or in the future.

DCP Sign-Up Deadline

Enrollment for the 2012 Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP) will continue through June 1, 2012. USDA urges producers to make use of the eDCP automated website to sign-up or visit any USDA Service Center to

complete the 2012 DCP contract.

USDA computes DCP Program payments using base acres and payment yields established for each farm. Eligible producers receive direct payments at rates established by statute regardless of market prices. For more information on this or other programs, contact the nearest FSA office.

ACRE Program

The Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) offers producers an alternative to Direct and Counter-Cyclical (DCP) payments. The ACRE alternative provides eligible producers a state-level revenue guarantee, based on the five-year state Olympic average yield and the two-year national average price.

ACRE payments are made when both state- and farm-level triggers are met. By participating in ACRE, producers elect to forgo counter-cyclical payments. Producers also agree to receive a 20 percent reduction in direct payments and a 30 percent reduction in loan rates.

A decision to elect ACRE binds the producer to the program through the 2012 crop year, the last crop year covered by the 2008 Farm Bill. For more details contact the local FSA office.

2010 SURE Sign-Up Deadline

Sign-up for the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payment (SURE) program for the 2010 crop year began Nov. 14, 2011, and will end on **June 1, 2012**. SURE provides benefits for farm revenue losses due to natural disasters. A farm is eligible when either:

- A portion of the farm is located in a county, or a contiguous county, covered by a qualifying Secretarial disaster declaration.

OR

- An overall loss greater than 50 percent of the actual production on the farm compared to expected production for the farm for that year.

For producers to be eligible for SURE, they must have obtained a policy or plan of insurance for all crops, with the exception of grazing, through either the Federal Crop Insurance Act or FSA's Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP). Producers must suffer a 10 percent production loss due to a natural disaster to at least one crop of economic significance on their farm in order to be eligible for SURE.

NAP Records

Production records for individual crops need to be filed at the FSA office to establish an approved NAP yield. If this is the first year you participated in NAP, you can provide production and acreage information from prior years to establish your yield. If you participated in NAP in previous years, you must report your production and acreage on a yearly basis to keep your yield up-to-date. Records submitted must be reliable or verifiable. Records need to show crop disposition. We recommend producers submit production records as soon as harvest is complete. **All production records must be submitted by the subsequent crop year's final acreage reporting date.**

NAP Loss Filing

The CCC-576, Notice of Loss, is used to report failed acreage, prevented planting and production losses on NAP covered crops and may be completed by any producer with an interest in the crop. Timely filing a Notice of Loss is required for all crops including grasses. For losses on crops covered by the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), you must file a CCC-576, Notice of Loss, in the

FSA County Office within 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent.

If filing for prevented planting, an acreage report and CCC-576 must be filed within 15 calendar days of the final planting date for the crop.

Adjusted Gross Income

USDA and the Internal Revenue Service have established an electronic information exchange process for verifying compliance with the adjusted gross income (AGI) provisions for farm programs. Written consent is required from each producer or payment recipient for the tax review process. No actual tax data will be included in the report that IRS sends to FSA.

This ensures that payments are not issued to producers whose AGI exceeds certain limits. The limits set in the 2008 Farm Bill are \$500,000 nonfarm average AGI for commodity and disaster programs; \$750,000 farm average AGI for direct payments and; \$1 million nonfarm average AGI for conservation programs.

Participants in CCC programs subject to average AGI rules must submit form CCC-931 to their local FSA County Office to avoid interruption of program benefits. This form may be obtained from local FSA and NRCS offices.

Farm Reconstitutions

At FSA, farms are "constituted" to group all tracts having the same owner and the same operator under one farm serial number. When changes in ownership or operation take place, a farm reconstitution is necessary. If an owner or operator cannot agree about program participation, like in the case of the new ACRE program, then producers should inquire about a reconstitution of the farm at the local FSA office.

The reconstitution — or recon — is the process of combining or dividing farms or tracts of land based on the farming operation. Remember, to be effective for the current year, recons must be requested by Aug. 1, 2012, for farms enrolled in specific programs.

Pulse Crops

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 states that eligible pulse crop acres may be added as base acres.

The addition of pulse crop base acres is:

- Effective for 2009 through 2012 crop years
- Required to be calculated in the same manner as eligible oilseed acreage under the 2002 Farm Bill

The calculation of pulse crop base acres and yield is based on the acreage and yield history from the 1998 through 2001 crop years. Pulse crops are defined as:

- Dry peas (green, yellow, Austrian, Umatilla and wrinkled); intended uses must be seed or dry edible
- Lentils; any intended use
- Large chickpeas (Kabuli garbanzo beans); any intended use
- Small chickpeas (Desi garbanzo beans); any intended use

Pulse crop base acres will only be eligible for counter-cyclical or Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) payments for 2009 through 2012 crop years. Direct payments will not be eligible.

Measurement Service

Farmers who would like a guarantee on their crop plantings and land use acreages can make it official by using the FSA measurement service. Producers must file a request with the county office staff and pay the cost of

a field visit to have stake and referencing done on the farm. Measurement service is available using digital imagery. If an on-site visit is not required producers are charged a reduced rate.

Incorrect acreage self-certification can result in reduced program payments, penalty or loss of eligibility.

Producers can request ortho-imagery and CLU covering their land (commonly referred to as a clip) at no charge. This would provide the acreage of an entire field.

Sodbuster Regulations

The term sodbusting is used to identify the plowing up of erosion-prone grasslands for use as cropland. Sodbuster violations are unauthorized tillage practices on highly erodible lands that converted native vegetation such as rangeland or woodland to crop production after Dec. 23, 1985.

Farmers and ranchers should be aware that if they use highly erodible land for crop production without proper conservation measures, they risk losing eligibility to participate in Farm Service Agency programs.

Before producers clear, plow or otherwise prepare areas not presently under crop production for planting, they are required to file an AD-1026, indicating the area to be brought into production.

If Natural Resources Conservation Service indicates on a CPA-026 that the area will be highly erodible land, the producer will be required to develop and implement a conservation plan on the affected acreage, before bringing land into production.

In addition, producers and the producer's affiliates have to file an AD-1026 in the administrative or control county office before any farm program payments can be made. The AD-1026 is the producer's signed certification that HELC, as well as

wetland conservation, provisions will not be violated.

Farm Loan Programs

The Farm Service Agency is committed to providing family farmers with loans to meet their farm credit needs. Those producers who are having trouble getting credit for their farm or who regularly borrow from FSA, direct and guaranteed loans are currently available.

Ask a lender about an FSA loan guarantee to help with a setback or if a lender has been reluctant to extend or renew a loan.

Farm ownership loans or farm operating loans may be obtained as direct loans for a maximum of up to \$300,000. Guaranteed loans have a maximum limit of \$1,214,000. This makes the maximum combination of direct and guaranteed loan indebtedness \$1,514,000.

The one-time loan origination fee charged on FSA guaranteed farm ownership and operating loans has increased from 1 percent to 1.5 percent of the guaranteed portion of the loan, for loans obligated after Oct. 1, 2011.

To find out more about FSA loan programs, contact the county office staff.

Banking Changes?

If you changed banks and did not notify FSA, your payment could be delayed. Payments are electronically transferred into your bank account, if we are not aware of changes to your account and routing numbers, there could be problems. 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 is important that any changes in a producer's account such as type account, bank mergers, routing number or account numbers, be provided to the county

office promptly to avoid possible payment delay.

CONSERVATION COMPLIANCE (HEL & WETLAND)

Producers intending to remove fence rows, convert woodlots to cropland, install new drainage, or improve or modify existing drainage, must notify the FSA and update Form AD-1026. FSA will notify NRCS and NRCS will make HEL and wetland technical determinations. Farmers with HEL determined soils are reminded of tillage, crop residue and rotation requirements per their conservation plan. Failure to obtain ADVANCE approval for any of these situations can result in the loss of eligibility and all federal payments.

MILC PROGRAM

FSA's Milk Income Loss Contract Program (MILC) compensates dairy producers when domestic milk prices fall below a specified level. MILC payments are made when the Boston Class I milk price falls below \$16.94 per hundredweight (cwt) as adjusted by the dairy feed ration adjustment. The monthly Boston price is posted online at:
http://www.fmmone.com/Northeast_Order_Prices/NE_Prices_main_new.htm.

Eligible producers should submit the current MILC (Milk Income Loss Contract) statements for payment. Eligibility for 2012 must be completed before payments can be disbursed. Please contact the office to check the status of your eligibility. New producers are encouraged to apply for the program any time before Sept. 30, 2012.

Selected Interest Rates for May 2012	
90-Day Treasury Bill	0.125%
Farm Operating Loans - Direct	1.5%
Farm Ownership Loans - Direct	3.5%
Farm Ownership - Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.5%
Emergency Loans	3.75%
Farm Storage Facility Loans	1.5%
Commodity Loans 1996-Present	1.125%

Dates to Remember	
May 28	Memorial Day, Federal Offices Closed
May 31	Last day to report fall & spring planted small grains
June 1	DCP Enrollment Ends
June 1	Farm Record Changes Due
June 1	SURE Sign-Up Ends
June 15	COC Nominations Open
July 2	Last day to report 2012 planted crops except soybeans, tobacco, and grain sorghum
July 16	Last day to report soybeans, grain sorghum, tobacco, hay pasture, and CRP/CREP
Continues	Continuous Conservation Reserve Program