

January 2013



New London County FSA Updates

New London County FSA Office

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County Committee Elections

Congratulations to George Palmer, North Stonington on being elected to the New London County Committee. Arthur Spielman, III was elected First Alternate, and Jerry Grabarek was elected Second Alternate. Thanks to all LAA #3 eligible voters who returned ballots. The county committee systems work only because of your participation. The committee members will hold their organizational meeting in January to determine who will serve as the county committee chairman and vice-chairman.

Farm Loan Information

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is committed to providing clear and concise explanation of its farm loan process, and is pleased to announce the online publication titled "Your Guide to FSA Farm Loans."

The guide, written in "plain Language", provides information about FSA's farm loans and loan servicing options. A list of additional resources is also included in the guide. The guide is available online at www.fsa.usda.gov/dafil.

Youth Loans

Rural youth with agricultural projects or planned projects can borrow up to \$5,000.00 through the FSA Youth Loan Program. Eligible ages are 10 to 20 years old. The project must be modest in size, educational and initiated, developed and carried out by the youth who is participating in 4-H, FFA or a similar organization. The project should produce enough income to repay the loan. This program is offered to help teach youth about practical business skills while developing agriculture projects.

Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Compliance

Landowners and operators are reminded that in order to receive payments from USDA, compliance with Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions is required. Farmers with HEL determined soils must apply tillage, crop residue, and rotation requirements as specified in their conservation plan.

Producers should notify FSA prior to conducting land clearing or drainage projects to insure compliance. If you

intend to clear any trees to create new cropland, these areas will need to be reviewed to ensure any work will not jeopardize your eligibility for benefits.

Landowners and operators can complete form AD-1026 Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELIC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification to determine whether a referral to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is necessary. For more information on Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation provisions, contact a FSA County Office or visit the FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov/.

Bank Account Changes

Current policy mandates that FSA payments be electronically transferred into a bank account. In order for timely payments to be made, producers need to notify the FSA county office when an account has been changed or if another financial institution purchases the bank where payments are sent. Payments can be delayed if the FSA office is not aware of updates to bank accounts and routing numbers.

Farming Operation Changes

Producers who have bought or sold land, or added or dropped rented land from their operation must report those changes to the FSA office as soon as possible. Failure to do so can lead to possible program ineligibility and penalties. While making record updates, be sure to update signature authorizations. Making record changes now will save time in the spring.

Foreign Buyers Notification

The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) 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.

All individuals who are not U.S. citizens, and have purchased or sold agricultural land in the county are required to report the transaction to FSA within 90 days of the closing. Failure to submit the AFIDA form (FSA-153) 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.

IRS 1099 Changes

Calendar year 2012 brought changes to the way FSA reports farm program payments to the producer and to the IRS. In past years, IRS Forms 1099-G would be issued to show all program payments received from the Farm Service Agency, regardless of the amount.

For calendar year 2012, producers whose total reportable payments from FSA were less than \$600 will not receive IRS Form 1099-G. Also, producers who receive payments from more than one county will only receive one Form 1099-G if the total of all payments from all counties is \$600 or more. The same changes will apply to producers and vendors who normally receive IRS Form 1099-MISC from FSA.

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 staff directly or by phone.

Hispanic and Women Farmers and Ranchers Claims Period

The USDA has announced that Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers who allege discrimination by the USDA in past decades can file claims between September 24, 2012 and March 25, 2013. The process offers a voluntary alternative to litigation for each Hispanic or female farmer or rancher who can prove that USDA denied their applications for loan or loan servicing assistance for discriminatory reasons for certain time periods between 1981 and 2000.

As announced in February 2011, the voluntary claims process will make available at least \$1.33 billion for cash awards and tax relief payments, plus up to \$160 million in farm debt relief, to eligible Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers. There are no filing fees to participate in the program. The Department will continue reaching out to potential Hispanic and female claimants around the country to get the word out to individuals who may be eligible for this program to ensure they have the opportunity to participate.

Call center representatives can be reached at 1-888-508-4429. Claimants must register for a claims package (by calling the number or visiting the website) and the claims package will be mailed to the claimants. All those interested in learning more or receiving information about the claims process and claims packages are encouraged to access the website or call the claims telephone number.

Website: www.farmerclaims.gov

Phone: 1-888-508-4429

Claims Period: Sept. 24, 2012 - March 25, 2013

Independent legal services companies will administer the claims process and adjudicate the claims. Although there are no filing fees to participate and a lawyer is not required to participate in the claims process, persons seeking legal advice may contact a lawyer or other legal services provider.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Stop 9410, Washington, DC 20250-9450, or call toll-free at (866) 632-9992 (English) or (800) 877-8339 (TDD) or (866) 377-8642 (English Federal-relay) or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish Federal-relay).
