

Your Farm Service Agency Online Monthly Newsletter Covering the Latest Topics

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Streamlining the Disaster Designation Process

A draft rule posted to the Federal Register (<http://www.regulations.gov>) on November 14, 2012 would streamline the process of Secretarial Disaster Designations following a natural disaster. The public comment period will extend for 60-days or until January 13, 2012. The proposed rule shortens the procedures that have been in place for more than 20 years and expedites the process for producers to begin receiving federal assistance.

Highlights of the proposed rule includes delegating authority to designate a disaster to state Farm Service Agency officials in the case of hurricanes, floods, heavy rainfall and other natural disasters. This would remove the requirement that a request must come from a state governor, although the proposed rule would still allow governors to request designations. For severe drought disasters, documentation would rely only on the U.S. Drought Monitor, again speeding up the process. For all other natural disasters and drought conditions that are not considered to be severe, the same criteria currently used would apply – that being the county must show a 30 percent production loss of at least one (1) crop countywide.



Retain Your Receipts for 2012 RTCP

The U.S. Congress recently approved \$1.996 million in funding for fiscal year 2012 for the Reimbursement of Transportation Cost Payment Program (RTCP) for Geographically Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers. Producers interested in applying for the reimbursement of a portion of the costs to transport agricultural inputs and products are urged to retain their original purchase receipts from October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012. Sign-up deadline for 2012 RTCP will be announced at a later date.

The RTCP program was authorized by the 2008 Farm Bill to assist with high production costs experienced by farmers and ranchers in Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and Alaska. For more information on the RTCP program visit your local county office or www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport.

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Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE)

The 2010 SURE sign-up for production losses is going on now through **June 1, 2012**.

The Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE) provides benefits for farm revenue losses due to natural disasters that occurred in the crop year 2010. SURE is available to eligible producers with qualifying losses for:

Farms in counties with Secretarial disaster declarations, this includes Hawaii, Honolulu, Kauai, and Maui counties. All economically significant crops grown by a producer nationwide are eligible, except grazed crops.

OR

Any farm for the crop year in which the disaster-related conditions reduced the actual production on the farm to 50 percent or less than normal production of the farm.



IRS Form 1099-G

Producers receive CCC-1099-Gs annually detailing payments from the Commodity Credit Corporation. The annual report of program payments on the CCC-1099-G is a service intended to help FSA customers report taxable income. It is not intended to replace the producers' responsibility to report income to the IRS.

Farm Service Agency staff cannot interpret IRS regulations or advise producers about which payments to report on their income tax returns. However, county office staff can review payments for accuracy of data.

Farm Loan Programs

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is committed to providing family farmers with loans to meet their farm credit needs. If you are having trouble getting the credit you need for your farm, direct and guaranteed loans are currently available.

Ask your lender about an FSA loan guarantee if you have had a setback and your lender is reluctant to extend or renew your 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. The one-time loan origination fee charged on FSA guaranteed loans has increased from 1 percent to 1.5 percent of the guaranteed portion of the loan, for loans obligated after October 1, 2011.

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



Loans for Women and Minorities

Farm Service Agency (FSA) has a number of loan programs available to assist applicants to begin or continue in agriculture production. Loans are available for operating type loans and/or to purchase or improve farms or ranches.

While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, FSA has provided targeted funding for women and minorities. Eligible minority groups include Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, American Indians, Alaska Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Hispanics and women.

If producers or their spouses believe they would qualify for these targeted loans, they should contact their local FSA office for details. All FSA applicants must meet all loan eligibility and feasibility requirements.

Interest Rates for December 2011	
Farm Operating - Direct	1.50%
Farm Ownership - Direct	3.375%
Farm Ownership - Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.500%
Emergency	3.750%
Limited Resource	5.000%

Disaster Assistance Programs

Farm Service Agency disaster assistance programs include:

- Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish (ELAP)
- Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP)
- Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)
- Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments (SURE) Program
- Tree Assistance Program (TAP)

To be eligible for the SURE, TAP and ELAP programs, producers must have purchased catastrophic risk protection insurance for all insurable crops, and NAP coverage for non-insurable crops. Sign-up ends January 30, 2012, for LFP, LIP, and ELAP. Producers have 90 days from the time a loss is apparent to file an application for TAP.

Farm-Raised Fish means all fish being produced for sale by an eligible producer. In the case of honey, the term "farm" means all bees and beehives that are intended to be harvested for a honey crop by the eligible producer.

Producers who meet the definition of Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource or Beginning Farmer or Rancher may not be required to pay for the catastrophic insurance or NAP fee. Contact your local FSA office for eligibility details.

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.

There are exceptions to the rule, where spouses may not sign on behalf of each other for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations or other similar entities.

Individual signatures are also required on certain Farm Loan Program and Farm Storage Facility Loan documents.

Hispanic and Women Farmers and Ranchers

A process to resolve the claims of Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers who believe they were discriminated against when seeking United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) farm loans has been established.

If you believe that the USDA improperly denied farm loan benefits to you between 1981 and 2000 because you are Hispanic, or because you are female, you may be eligible to apply for compensation.

For additional information on this and other settlement issues contact:

Hispanic and Women Farmer Claims Process:

www.farmerclaims.gov or call 1-888-508-4429.

Pigford – Black Farmers Discrimination Litigation:

www.blackfarmercase.com or call 1-866-950-5547.

Keepseagle - The Native American Farmers Class Action Settlement:

www.IndianFarmClass.com or call 1-888-233-5506.



Hawaii Agricultural Mediation Program

The USDA recently certified the Hawaii Agricultural Mediation Program (HIAMP) to provide mediation services to the agricultural community in the state of Hawaii. The program is intended to assist agricultural producers, their lenders and other persons directly affected by the actions of the USDA in resolving disputes. Through the mediation process, a trained, impartial person (mediator) helps participants review their conflicts, identify options and agree on solutions.

Mediation is a voluntary and confidential alternative to the traditional legal and regulatory process, and it is offered as part of the Department's informal appeals process; however, mediation must be requested before an appeal hearing is held with the USDA National Appeals Division. It is not intended to override or supersede any existing federal regulation or procedures. Services under HIAMP are made available free of charge for USDA related cases.



Farm Service Agency: Top 5 Accomplishments of 2011

- ◆ Enhanced Disaster Assistance – The Farm Service Agency (FSA) implemented outstanding provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill, including the five (5) permanent disaster programs which provided more than \$3.5 billion dollars to U.S. farmers and ranchers during some of the most significant disaster events to affect agriculture in years.
- ◆ Improved Access to Capital – During Fiscal Years 2009–2011, FSA provided 103,000 loans to family farmers, totaling \$14.6 billion dollars in total credit. Over 50 percent of the loans went to beginning farmers, and women and minority farmers and ranchers.
- ◆ Effective Food Aid Distribution – The FSA procurements for domestic and international food aid commodities for fiscal year 2011 totaled more than \$1.38 billion dollars for food insecure recipients in the United States and abroad.
- ◆ Promoted Resource Stewardship and Improved Air Quality – The FSA has held two (2) general signups under the Conservation Reserve Program, and continues to help farmers participate in continuous CRP program such as Hawaii Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). In 2010 alone, these programs led to a 52 million metric ton reduction in green house gasses – the equivalent of taking 10 million cars off the road.

- ◆ Improved Civil Rights Climate and Service Delivery – The FSA’s focus on strategic planning and implementation of cultural transformation initiatives has resulted in increased lending to women and minority borrowers and resulted in a record low number of civil rights program complaints. During Fiscal Years 2009-2011, FSA processed over five (5) million program requests from farmers and ranchers while less than 100 civil rights complaints have been filed.

Dates to Remember	
Dec. 20, 2011	Maui County Committee Meeting
Dec. 26, 2011	Christmas Holiday - Offices Closed
Jan. 2, 2012	Elected County Office Committee Members and Alternates take Office
Jan. 2, 2012	New Year Holiday - Offices Closed
Jan. 15, 2012	Ranchers—Last Day to File a Notice of Loss for NAP 2011
Jan. 16, 2012	Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Observed - Offices Closed
Jan. 30, 2012	Sign-up applications for LFP due in County Office
June 1, 2012	Deadline to file for SURE 2010
Ongoing	Hawaii CREP (Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program) Signup

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