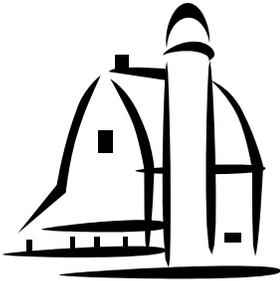




# Gratiot County Farm Service Agency Newsletter

April 2013



Gratiot County  
USDA Service Center

**Gratiot County FSA**  
301 Commerce Dr.  
Ithaca, MI 48847  
(989) 875-3900 (phone)  
(989) 875-4500 (fax)  
www.fsa.usda.gov/mi

**Hours**  
Monday - Friday  
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

**County Committee**  
Scott Apple  
Olan Humm  
Doreen Slavik  
Andrea Ackels

The County  
Committee meets  
Quarterly – call the office  
for details.

**Staff**  
Ben Belkholm, PT  
Melissa Dettloff, PT  
Teri Hedrick, PT  
Jeff Pearsall, PT  
Kay Perkins, PT  
Jon LaPorte, SFLO  
Steve Markley, CED



## Farm Record Changes

June 1, 2013 is the deadline to provide changes to your farm records at the local FSA office for the current crop year. These include:

- dropping or picking up rented farmland
- buying or selling land
- modifications in crop share arrangements  
(Note: New leases will be required for cash rented farms)
- entity changes - such as creating a trust, partnership, LLC, or corporation, or modification of members' shares within an entity

Also be sure to inform the FSA office of address changes or changes in tillable acres due to housing, barn, or wind turbine construction.

It is critical these changes are addressed as soon as you're aware and *before* your sign-up appointment. This will eliminate additional trips to FSA and unproductive time in the office. Current records make signup more accurate and efficient.

## **2013 Crop Certifications**

CRP should be inspected in the next few weeks. Report any cover issues and do your annual certification well before the deadline of July 15th.

Hay and wheat producers: If you missed the deadline to certify your crops last fall, call for an appointment now. You will not be charged a late fee in this transitional year.

After spring planting, producers should certify their 2013 acreage. Filing an accurate acreage report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage and prevented planting acreage, can prevent the loss of benefits for a variety of programs.

Failed acreage must be reported within 15 days of the disaster event and before disposition of the crop. Prevented planting must be reported no later than 15 days after the final planting date.

## Wetland Provisions

Potential violations of the wetland rules include bringing new land into production by clearing trees (including fence rows) or improving drainage by tiling or dredging. **Before you BEGIN any of these projects, you need to fill out form AD-1026.**

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will complete a certified evaluation of the tract to determine if there are areas that are wet and highly erodible. This process takes *at least* 60 days to complete. NRCS will notify you by mail of the results.

With the new mapping system, updated imagery clearly shows where land has been cleared or drained. The penalty for a wetland violation can be loss of *all* USDA benefits back to the year of conversion. By checking with our office before you start a project, you can remain in compliance and avoid the penalties. Plan ahead, sign form AD-1026 and get your determination completed before clearing trees and/or tiling.

## **Banking Changes?**

Please notify our office if you make any changes to your banking account. This would include closing your own account, closing the account for a deceased relative, changing the account the deposit goes into, bank mergers, and routing number or account number adjustments. Attempting to make direct deposits into closed accounts will often cause long delays in the payment process.

Promptly provide the county office with this information to avoid payment delay.



## CRP Sign-Up Starts Soon

USDA will conduct a four-week general sign-up for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), beginning May 20 and ending on June 14. CRP protects the nation's natural resources through voluntary participation, while providing significant economic and environmental benefits to rural communities across the United States.

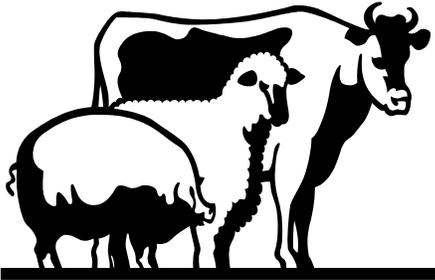


Currently, about 27 million acres are enrolled in CRP. Producers that are accepted in the program can receive cost-share assistance to plant long-term, resource-conserving covers and receive an annual rental payment for the length of the contract which is 10-15 years.

Contracts on 3.3 million acres of CRP are set to expire on Sept. 30, 2013. Producers with expiring contracts or producers with environmentally sensitive land are encouraged to evaluate their options under CRP.

For more information on CRP and other FSA programs, visit a local FSA service center or [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

## New Microloan Program



FSA developed the Microloan (ML) program to better serve the unique financial operating needs of beginning, niche and the smallest of family farm operations.

The program will operate similar to the Operating Loan program but will include reduced requirements for managerial experience and loan security, as well as reduced paperwork. The microloan program can be used for such expenses as annual crop inputs, marketing and distribution expenses, purchase of

livestock and equipment, and minor farm improvements such as wells and coolers. Eligible applicants may obtain a microloan for up to \$35,000. The repayment term may vary and will not exceed seven years. Annual operating loans are repaid within 12 months of when the agricultural commodities produced are sold. Interest rates will be the same as the regular Operating Loan rates.

## Hispanic and Women Farmers and Ranchers Claims Process Extended

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has announced the extension of the voluntary claims process for Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers who allege discrimination by the USDA in past decades. All claims must now be filed by May 1, 2013. USDA urges potential claimants to contact the Claims Administrator for information and mail their claim packages on or before May 1, 2013.

The process offers a voluntary alternative to litigation for each Hispanic or female farmer and rancher who can prove that USDA denied his or her application 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.

Claimants may register for a claims package by calling the telephone number below Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern Time or by downloading the forms from the website.

Website: [www.farmerclaims.gov](http://www.farmerclaims.gov)

Phone: 1-888-508-4429

Email: [claims@hwfr.org](mailto:claims@hwfr.org)

Claims Period: September 24, 2012 – May 1, 2013.

Claim packages and other documentation may be mailed to Hispanic and Women Farmers and Ranchers Claims Administrator, PO Box 4540, Portland, OR 97208-4540. Claim packages and other documentation may also be emailed to [claims@hwfr.org](mailto:claims@hwfr.org). Claimants may also fax claims packages and other documentation to (855) 626-8343. Completed forms and documentation must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. PDT on May 1, 2013.

## **Beginning and Limited Resource Farmers**

FSA assists beginning farmers and/or members of socially disadvantaged groups to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:

- Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years
- Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm.
- Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA.
- Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's median size.

Additional program information, loan applications and other materials are available at your local USDA Service Center. You may visit [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)

### ***Important Dates to Remember***

- **May 20th** - 45th CRP Sign-up begins
- **May 27th** - Office closed in observance of Memorial Day
- **May 31st** - Final date to request 2012-crop feed grain, oilseed loan or LDP
- **June 3rd** - 2013 ACRE Sign-up ends
- **June 7th** - 2011 SURE Sign-up ends
- **June 14th** - CRP Sign-up ends
- **June 30th** - Final date for late-filed certifications for fall-2012 seeded crops, Hay, and Mixed Forage
- **July 15th** - 2012 production reporting deadline for 2012 ACRE program
- **July 15th** - Final day to provide 2012 production for NAP crops
- **July 15th** - 2013 crop reporting deadline
- **August 2nd** - 2013 DCP sign-up ends



## **2011 Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program Applications**

FSA will continue to accept SURE applications for 2011 crop losses through June 7, 2013. The SURE Program provides payments to producers when crop revenues are less than the crop guarantee. The SURE Program payment is equal to 60 percent of the difference between the crop guarantee and revenue.

To determine the guarantee and revenue for the SURE Program, all crops on all farms for a producer are included in the calculation. Payments under the SURE Program are limited to \$100,000.

To be eligible for the 2011 SURE Program, producers must have crop insurance on all insurable crops. For crops that are not covered by crop insurance such as pumpkins and cucumbers, producers must have purchased Non Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage from FSA. The Crop Insurance and NAP purchase requirement is waived for crops that are not economically significant to the farming operation. To be eligible, the producer must have at least one crop with a 10 percent production loss.

For more information concerning the 2011 SURE program or other Farm Service Agency programs, contact your local FSA office or visit the Farm Service Agency website at [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)



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).