



NEWSLETTER



February 2012

Kent County FSA

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Newaygo/Muskegon County FSA

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Websites

www.fsa.usda.gov/mi
www.fsa.usda.gov
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Hours

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

Kent County Committee

Terry Nugent
Ronald Alt
Fredrick Oesch
Deb Kober, Advisor

Newaygo/Muskegon County Committee

Craig Zeerip
David Stout
Brian Abbott
Dennis Sikkenga
Jean Stroven, Advisor

County Executive Director

David Bain

Farm Loan Managers

Paul Wagner, Kent &
Muskegon
Larry Cleary, Newaygo

Staff

Kent:
Richard Dunton
Nina Zick
Debbie Diehl

Newaygo/Muskegon:

John Vander Meulen
Lisa Smalligan
Kathy Nelson

CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM, General Sign-Up 43, March 12 - April 6, 2012

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will hold a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) general sign-up from March 12 through April 6, 2012.

CRP is a voluntary program that helps agricultural producers use environmentally sensitive land for conservation benefits. Producers enrolled in CRP plant long-term, resource-conserving covers to control soil erosion, improve water and air quality and develop wildlife habitat. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 to 15 years. Accepted contracts for CRP sign-up 43 will begin on Oct. 1, 2012.

To submit CRP offers, producers must visit their local FSA office. FSA will accept offers only during the sign-up period. To find a local FSA office, visit the USDA website at <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>.

2012 DCP/ACRE Sign-up

2012 Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP) enrollment began Jan. 23, 2012 and will end June 1, 2012. Here are some IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

- All producers planting on **DCP base** acres must be identified on the DCP/ACRE contract and receive a proportionate share of DCP/ACRE payment for the farm.
- Changes on the farm after enrolling June 1st in DCP/ACRE **must** be reported to your local FSA office such as:
 - Ownership
 - Producer (Individuals and Entities)
 - Crop share arrangements

Note: Changes cannot be made after Sept. 30, 2012.

CASH LEASE REQUIREMENTS

All leases provided to FSA Offices must include:

- 1) Type of lease
- 2) Length of lease

- 3) Landowner & operator names printed as well as signatures and date
- A CCC-510 (cash rent certification option) may be used in lieu of a formal written lease. This option is only available if you cash leased the farm in 2011, were designated to receive payment in 2011 and ownership did not change.

Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE)

The sign-up for 2010 losses runs through **June 1, 2012.**

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

- Farms in counties with Secretarial disaster declarations, including contiguous counties, that have incurred crop production or quality losses, or both, and includes all crops grown by a producer nationwide, except grazed crops.
- Any farm in which the actual 2010 production on the farm because of disaster-related conditions is 50 percent or less than normal production of the farm.

FSA Moving to Electronic Newsletters

The USDA Farm Service Agency offices are moving toward a paperless operation. Producers are asked to enroll in the new EGovDelivery system which will provide notices, newsletters and electronic reminders instead of a hard copy through the mail. Moving towards electronic publications will help conserve resources and save taxpayer dollars. To sign up for EGovDelivery please access;

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/subscribe>

Check out Michigan's website at www.fsa.usda.gov/mi

Power of Attorney

For those who find it difficult to visit the county office personally because of work schedules, distance, health, etc., FSA has a power of attorney form available that enables you to designate another person to conduct your business at the office. If you are interested, contact any Farm Service Agency office near you for more information. POAs will not apply to CCC-931s (average adjusted gross income (AGI) certification and consent to disclosure of tax information).

Appointments Recommended

We recommend you call to make an appointment before coming to the office to conduct business. This will enable us to prepare any necessary paperwork and research issues before your appointment. We realize how important your time is and this will reduce the amount of time that you will have to wait in 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 staff.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)

The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) is a program that helps producers reduce their risk when growing food and fiber crops, specialty crops and crops for livestock feed. These benefits are only available for crops for which the catastrophic level of crop insurance is not available. Application for coverage must be filed by the applicable crop's application closing date. (Refer to dates to remember.)

Production records for all crops must be reported to FSA no later than the acreage reporting date for the crop for the following year. FSA requires that any production reported in a loss year be verifiable according to Agency specifications. *NAP Losses must be reported within 15 days of loss.*

Commodity Loans

Commodity loans, also referred to as Marketing Assistance Loans, are available to producers who share in the risk of producing the crop. To be eligible, you must maintain beneficial interest in the crop through the time of application. Once beneficial interest in a commodity is lost, the commodity is ineligible for loan — even if you regain beneficial interest.

Violating provisions of a marketing assistance loan may trigger administrative actions, such as assessing liquidated damages, calling the loan and denial of future farm-stored loans. The most common violations are removing or disposing of a commodity being used as loan collateral without prior authorization and providing an incorrect quantity certification.

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.

Farming Operation Changes

If you have bought or sold land, or if you have added or dropped rented land from your operation, make sure you report the changes to the office as soon as possible. You need to provide a copy of your deed or recorded land contract for purchased property. Failure to maintain accurate records with FSA on all land you have an interest in can lead to possible program ineligibility and penalties. Making the record changes now will save you time in the spring. Update signature authorization when changes in the operation occur. Producers are reminded to notify the office of a change in operations on a farm so that records can be kept current and accurate.

Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation 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 are required. Farmers with HEL determined soils are reminded of tillage, crop residue, and rotation requirements as specified per their conservation plan. Producers are to notify the USDA Farm Service Agency prior to conducting land clearing or drainage projects to insure compliance. Failure to obtain advance approval for any of these situations can result in the loss of eligibility and all Federal payments.

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. Prohibited plants include marijuana, opium, poppies and other drug producing plants.

Prevented Planting Acreage

FSA issued revised provisions regarding the maximum number of prevented planted acres to be approved. FSA will no longer base the eligibility on the history of planting and/or prevented planting of the specific crop.

Deadline to file for prevented planting acreage must be requested within 15 days of the final plant date.

USDA Minority Farm Register (MFR)

MFR is a national USDA project that was developed by FSA and the USDA Office of Advocacy and Outreach. It establishes a database of individuals who voluntarily provide their name, residential address, telephone number, E-mail address, ethnicity, race, gender, and the location of their farm or ranch to FSA on AD-2035 or AD-2035SP. By registering for MFR, individuals authorize the release of this information for the purpose of USDA outreach efforts conducted through USDA Agencies and USDA-approved outreach partners, such as community-based organizations (CBO's), colleges and universities, and other nonprofit groups or organizations representing SDA farmers and ranchers.

Bank Account Changes

Current policy mandates that FSA payments be electronically transferred into your bank account. For timely payments to be made, producers need to notify the FSA office if the account has been

changed or if another financial institution purchases your bank. Payments can be delayed if the FSA office is not aware of updates to your account and routing numbers.

Farm Loan Programs

The Farm Service Agency 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, or regularly borrow from FSA, direct and guaranteed loans are currently available.

Ask your lender about an FSA loan guarantee if 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. 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 October 1, 2011.

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

FSA Signature Policy

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.

Spouses cannot sign for each other on the CCC-931s (average adjusted gross income (AGI) certification and consent to disclosure of tax information).

For more clarification on spousal signature authority, contact your local FSA office.

WOMEN'S AND HISPANIC CLAIM PROCESS

The Federal Government has set up a claims process to provide money to farmers who may have been discriminated against because they were women or Hispanic. If you believe the United States Department of Agricultural (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.

If you want to register your name to receive a claims package, you can call the Farmer and Rancher Call Center at 1-888-508-4429 or access the following website: <https://farmerclaims.gov> More information is available at the Farm Service Agency office.



FARM STORAGE FACILITY LOANS

The Farm Storage Facility Loan Program is available to interested producer's who need additional on farm storage or would like to modify existing structures. Basic details of the program are:

- Provide quotes of new structures and/or a cost break down of new equipment.
- Pay a \$100.00 application fee.
- Purchase crop insurance on all insurable crops in the county where the facility is constructed.
- Purchase all peril insurance on the structure listing FSA as the loss payee.
- Complete a title search on the parcel underlying the facility.

Contact FSA for additional details.

Conservation Programs

SAFE (Native Pollinator) and Continuous CRP sign-up 42 are ongoing and applications are accepted at any time. A new CP-33 "Habitat Buffers for Upland Bird Focus Expansion" practice has been implemented for Kent, Newaygo & Muskegon Counties. Please call or come into the office to learn more about what programs may be available to you on your farming operation.



Loans for the Socially Disadvantaged

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 purchase or improve farms or ranches.

While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, the FSA has provided priority funding for members of socially disadvantaged applicants.

A socially disadvantaged applicant is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of his or her identity as members of the group without regard to his or her individual qualities.

For purposes of this program, socially disadvantaged groups are women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere.

2011 County Committee Election Results

The Newaygo/Muskegon County Committee election was held on December 8th with the following results: Dennis Sikkenga was re-elected to fill the three year term beginning January 1st.

The Kent County Committee election was held on December 7th with the following results:

Fredrick Oesch	COC Member
Michael R. Bowman	1 st Alternate
Loren Kaeb	2 nd Alternate

Due to budgetary issues, County Committee Meetings will be held quarterly throughout calendar year 2012. Dates of meetings and regular session minutes are posted in the offices. Please call your respective office in advance to confirm meeting dates and time.

Dates to Remember	
February 20	offices closed for the observance of President's Day
Mar 12 - Apr 6	CRP General Sign-Up
March 15	Final date to purchase NAP coverage for most spring seeded crops
March 31	Final date to obtain loans on harvested small grains for 2011
May 28	offices closed for the observance of Memorial Day
May 31	Final date to obtain loans on harvested corn and soybeans for 2011
June 1	Deadline for DCP Enrollment/ACRE Election
June 20	Final date to submit a prevented planting claim for corn
June 30	Final crop certification date for all fall seeded small grain Final date to submit a prevented planting claim for soybeans
July 4	offices closed for the observance of Independence Day
July 15	Final crop certification date for all crops (including CRP and GRP), except fall seeded small grains Deadline for reporting 2011 production for enrolled ACRE farms Deadline for reporting 2011 NAP crop production Deadline to establish Benchmark Yields for newly enrolled ACRE farms
September 3	offices closed for the observance of Labor Day
September 30	2013 NAP on forage
October 8	offices closed for the observance of Columbus Day
November 12	offices closed for the observance of Veterans Day
November 15	Final 2013 crop certification date for all 2012 fall seeded small grain & all perennial forage
November 20	2013 NAP on fruit & asparagus
November 22	offices closed for the observance of Thanksgiving Day
December 1	NAP sales closing on honey
December 25	offices closed for the observance of Christmas Day