

February 2013



## Kent County FSA Updates

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### Kent County FSA Office

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### DCP and ACRE Sign-up

FSA will begin sign-ups for DCP and ACRE for the 2013 crops on **Feb. 19, 2013**. The DCP sign-up period will end on Aug. 2, 2013; and the ACRE sign-up period will end on June 3, 2013.

The 2013 DCP and ACRE program provisions are unchanged from 2012, except that all eligible participants in 2013 may choose to enroll in either DCP or ACRE for the 2013 crop year. This means that eligible producers who were enrolled in ACRE in 2012 may elect to enroll in DCP in 2013 or may re-enroll in ACRE in 2013. Likewise producers who were enrolled in DCP may opt for ACRE enrollment.

[Read more about DCP and ACRE](#) or contact the FSA county office for more information, or to set an appointment to enroll.

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### 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. A copy of the deed or recorded land contract for purchase property is needed to maintain accurate records with FSA. 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.

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## USDA Announces Important Updates on the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) Program

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has announced that beginning February 5th, 2013, dairy farmers who are enrolled in the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) program will begin to receive payments for their September 2012 marketed production. The September 2012 marketing records were to be submitted to the FSA County Offices no later than November 1, 2012, however due to the legislative changes this is no longer the requirement. The American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 extended the authorization of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the 2008 Farm Bill) through 2013 for many programs administered by FSA, including MILC. The 2008 Farm Bill extension provides for a continuation of the MILC program through Sept. 30, 2013.

As previously announced by FSA, all dairy producers' MILC contracts are automatically extended to September 30th, 2013. Eligible producers therefore do not need to re-enroll in MILC. MILC operations with approved contracts will continue to receive monthly payments, if available.

**Dairy operations may select a production start month other than October 2012. Producers who want to**

**select a production start month other than October 2012 must visit their local FSA office between February 1st and February 28th, 2013, also known as a relief period.**

The payment rate for September 2012 is approximately \$0.59 per hundredweight. The payment rate for October 2012 is approximately \$0.02 per hundredweight. The payment rate for November 2012 marketing's is zero.

Before the October MILC payment can be issued, dairy farmers must complete a new Average Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) form for 2013. The CCC-933, Average Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) Certification and Consent to Disclosure of Tax Information, must be completed by producers before they can receive payments for a variety of programs administered by FSA and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. Producers may visit the local county FSA Office to sign the appropriate forms for the October payment cycle. Projected October 2012 MILC payments are tentatively scheduled to begin processing on March 5, 2013.

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## **New Microloan Program**

The Farm Service Agency (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.

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## **Hispanic and Women Farmer and Rancher Claims Period**

USDA has announced that Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers who allege discrimination by the USDA in past decades can file claims between Sept. 24, 2012 and March 25, 2013.

The process offers a voluntary alternative to litigation for each Hispanic or female farmer and 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 so 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 claimants. All those interested in learning more or receiving information about the claims process and claims packages are encouraged to attend meetings in their communities about the claims process and contact the website or claims telephone number.

**Website:** [www.farmerclaims.gov](http://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, people seeking legal advice may contact a lawyer or other legal services provider.

To read Secretary Tom Vilsack's news release click on the following link:

[www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentid=2012/09/0309.xml&contentidonly=true](http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentid=2012/09/0309.xml&contentidonly=true)

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## **Power of Attorney**

For those who find it difficult to visit the county office because of work schedules, distance, health, etc..., FSA has a power of attorney form available that allows producers to designate another person to conduct business at the office. If interested, contact our office or any Farm Service Agency office for more information.

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## **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.

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## **FSA Signature Policy**

Using the correct signature when doing business with FSA can save time and prevent a delay in program benefits. The following are FSA signature guidelines:

- Spouses may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and CCC programs in which either has an interest, unless written notification denying a spouse this authority has been provided to the county office
  - Spouses shall not sign on behalf of each other as an authorized signatory for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations, or other similar entities
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## **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.

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## **Unauthorized Disposition of Grain**

If loan grain has been disposed of through feeding, selling or any other form of disposal without prior written authorization from the county office staff, it is considered unauthorized disposition. The financial penalties for unauthorized dispositions are severe and a producer's name will be placed on a loan violation list for a two-year period. Always call before you haul any grain under loan.

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## **NRCS Conservation Programs: Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**

CSP encourages producers to improve their conservation performance by installing and adopting additional activities, and improving, maintaining, and managing existing activities on agricultural land and nonindustrial private forest land. Annual payments are available for installing new conservation activities and maintaining existing activities. All eligible lands must be enrolled for the 5 year contract period. Participation in CSP is voluntary. Please contact your local NRCS office at (616) 942-4111 ext. 3.

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### **Dates to Remember**

February 18 - Office closed in observance of Washington's Birthday.

February 19 - Sign-up for DCP and ACRE for the 2013 crops begins (see article within)

February 28 – Last Day of MILC relief period to request different production start month.

March 15 - Final date to purchase NAP coverage on most spring seeded NAP crops.

March 25- Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers claims deadline March 25, 2013.

March 31 - Final date to request a 2012-crop small grains and honey loans or LDP.

May 27 - Office closed in observance of Memorial Day.

May 31 - Final date to request 2012-crop feed grains, oilseeds loans or LDP.

June 7 - Deadline to sign-up for the SURE Program for 2011 crop losses.

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USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.