



# Lamoille County News

## Lamoille County USDA Service Center

**Lamoille County FSA**  
109 Professional Dr. Ste.2  
Morrisville, VT 05661  
802-888-4935 (phone)  
802-888-8901 (fax)  
www.fsa.usda.gov/vt

**Hours**  
Monday - Friday  
7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

**County Committee**  
Steven Jones, Chair  
Fred Boyden, Vice-Chair  
Christine Kaiser, reg. member

County Committee meets  
3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month

**Staff**  
**County Executive Director**  
John St.Onge (ext. 11)  
John.stonge@vt.usda.gov

**Program Staff**  
Beth Dennison (ext.10)  
Bethany.dennison@vt.usda.gov

**NRCS Staff**  
[www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)

**Soil Conservationist**  
Nancy Allen (ext. 15)  
Nancy.Allen@vt.usda.gov

James Eikenberry (ext.18)  
James.eikenberry@vt.usda.gov



## County Committee Election Results

Congratulations to Christine Kaiser! Christine was re-elected to represent farmers from Elmore, Stowe and Morristown on the county committee. Christine was elected to her second consecutive term. The election results for Local Administrative Area 3 are:

Christine Kaiser — Elected to the county committee (COC),  
David Rooney — 1<sup>st</sup> alternate to COC

FSA appreciates all of the voters for taking the time to complete the election ballot. The county committee system works 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.

## DCP Sign Up Underway

Sign-up has started for the 2009 Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment (DCP) Program for farms with base acres. You can sign up online or at local USDA service centers. Sign up will continue until June 1, 2009. The June 1, 2009 deadline is mandatory for all participants. FSA will not accept any late-filed applications.

The electronic DCP (or eDCP) service will save you time, reduce paperwork and speed up contract processing at FSA offices. It is available to anyone eligible to participate in the DCP Program and can be accessed at [www.fsa.usda.gov/dcp](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/dcp). To access this on-line service, you must have an active USDA eAuthentication Level 2 account, which requires filling out an online registration form at <http://www.eauth.egov.usda.gov> followed by a visit to the local USDA Service Center for identity verification.

FSA computes DCP Program payments using base acres and payment yields established for

each farm. Eligible producers receive direct payments at rates established by statute regardless of market prices. For 2009, you may request to receive advance direct payments based on 22 percent of the direct payment for each commodity associated with the farm. FSA will issue advance direct payments later this month. Counter-cyclical payment rates vary depending on market prices and are issued only when the effective price for a commodity is statutorily set below its target price.

Producers who are eligible for the DCP Program will also be eligible to enroll in the Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) Program. The enrollment period for the ACRE Program will begin in the spring. You may first enroll in the DCP Program, receive advance direct payments and then later modify your enrollment to include the ACRE program or you may wait and elect to enroll in DCP and ACRE at the same time in Spring 2009.

## MILC Sign Up Underway

Signup for the Milk Income Loss Contract Program (MILC) is underway and will continue through the program's expiration date, Sept. 30, 2012.

The 2008 Farm Bill reauthorizes the MILC Program, which operates similarly to the counter-cyclical payment program for crops, and makes three key changes in program operation. Under the Farm Bill, the MILC payment rate and the per-operation poundage limit are modified, depending on when the milk is produced. In addition, a "feed cost adjuster," is introduced over the life of the 2008 Act, which adjusts the \$16.94 per hundred-weight (cwt.) benchmark price upward depending on the cost of feed rations. When available, MILC payments are based on a payment rate percentage that is multiplied by the difference between a now-flexible target (\$16.94 per cwt. or higher) and the specific month's Boston Class I price of milk.



The 2008 Farm Bill made changes to the provisions for payment eligibility and adjusted gross income (AGI). If the individual or entity has non-farm AGI greater than \$500,000, the individual or entity is not eligible for MILC benefits.

For more information on the MILC program, contact your local USDA Service Center.

## **USDA Enacts Changes to Payment Limitations, Income Qualifications, and Implements Direct Attribution**

USDA recently published an interim final regulation in the Federal Register announcing changes to both Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) qualifications, program payment limitations, and direct attribution for FSA and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs, which became effective in accordance with the 2008 Farm Bill.

For commodity and disaster programs, the AGI limitation was reduced from \$2.5 million AGI from all sources to a three-year average non-farm AGI of \$500,000 such that a person or entity shall not be eligible for such programs if the non-farm AGI exceeds \$500,000. Also, under the new regulations, an individual or entity must have a 3-year average AGI less than or equal to \$750,000 per year from farm income in order to qualify for direct payments issued under the Direct and Counter-cyclical Program.

The definition of income derived from farming, ranching and forestry operations was expanded to include, among other items, such items as the packing, storing and transporting of agricultural commodities; production of livestock products; farm-based production of renewable bio-energy; and in some instances, the providing of operational inputs to farmers, ranchers and foresters.

For conservation programs, the average non-farm AGI limitation is \$1 million or less for eligibility with allowances for certain exceptions.

Individuals and entities must be "actively engaged in farming" with respect to a farming operation in order to be eligible for specified

payments and benefits. To be "actively engaged in farming," the individual or entity must make significant contributions to the farming operation of: (1) capital, equipment, land, or a combination; and (2) personal labor or active personal management, or a combination.

Public comments on this interim final rule must be submitted to the Department by within 30 days of the date of publication.

## **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.

Foreign persons who have purchased or sold agricultural land in the county are required to report the transaction to FSA with 90 days of the closing. Failure to submit the AFIDA form 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.

## **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.

## **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.

## 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, please contact our office or any Farm Service Agency office near you for more information.



## Bank Account Changes

Current policy mandates that FSA payments be electronically transferred into your bank account. In order for timely payments to be made, producers need to notify the FSA county office if your 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.

## Appeal Process

After an FSA official makes a decision on your request for USDA services or application, you will be sent a letter informing you of the decision and options you can pursue if you disagree.

Generally, program participants have three choices — an informal review with the original agency decision-maker, an opportunity for mediation and finally an appeal to the next level of authority within the agency.

## Customer Statement

January signals the beginning of a new year, and a time to starting thinking about filing taxes. Producers who have signed up for a USDA eAuthentication Level 2 account will be able to access their farm data via their Customer Statement.

The Customer Statement puts a range of USDA services and programs into a single report that's at your fingertips and available online, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

It allows USDA customers to view their participation, application and payment status in various commodity and conservation programs; information on farm loans; and conservation plan and land unit information.



## Loans for Socially Disadvantaged

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) can make and guarantee loans to socially disadvantaged applicants to buy and operate family size farms and ranches. Funds specifically for these loans are reserved each year. A socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of the group without regard to their individual qualities. For purposes of this program, socially disadvantaged groups are women, African Americans, American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, and Asians and Pacific Islanders. Contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager or Officer for more details and assistance in applying.

## Applications for FSA Loans

Farmers and ranchers that intend to apply to the Farm Service Agency for loan assistance for the upcoming crop year are encouraged to file their applications as early as possible. Filing early will help ensure that your loan is processed and approved as early as possible so that planting decisions can be made. Failure to apply early can result in a delay in processing loans due to the volume of applications that must be processed in date order. Contact your local FSA farm loan manager or officer for more details and assistance in applying.

## Youth Loans

Remember FSA makes operating loans to individual rural youths age 10 through 20 to establish and operate income producing projects. These projects must be of modest size and be initiated, developed, carried out by rural youths participating in 4-H Clubs, FFA, or a similar organization or with a vocational teacher or county extension agent. The project must be an organized and supervised program of work. It must be planned and operated with the assistance of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan, and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. Contact your local FSA office for more details.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its program and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



**DATES TO REMEMBER**

January 19 – Martin Luther King Day – Office Closed  
 February 15 – Presidents Holiday – Office Closed  
 Continues – Conservation Reserve Programs

**NRCS** has made some changes in how the EQIP program is being implemented. For the past several years we were required to evaluate all the resource concerns on the farm and to put practices into the contract that would address these resource concerns. The result of this type of conservation planning was very long contracts that were difficult to implement. For a producer that is interested in EQIP we still are required to evaluate all the resource concerns on the farm, but we do not have to address each one as a practice in the program contract. The goal is to start writing contracts that are only 1-2 years in length. Producers can come in and sign up for programs at any time. If you have questions call **Nancy Allen 888-4965 Ext 15**

Selected Interest Rates for January 2009	
Farm Operating - Direct	3.0%
Farm Ownership - Direct	4.875%
Emergency	3.75%
Farm Storage Facility	2.125%



Visit our Web site at  
<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/vt>