



February 2008

Antrim/Otsego County News

Antrim-Otsego County
USDA Service Center

Antrim-Otsego County
FSA

108 Depot Street
Bellaire, MI 49615
231-533-8542 (phone)
231-533-6689 (fax)
www.fsa.usda.gov/

Hours

Monday – Friday
8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

County Committee

Mark White, Chairperson
Barbara Fleming, Vice-
Chairperson
Roger Bolhuis, Member
John Makarewicz, Member
Deborah Milbocker,
Member

The County Committee
meets the second Friday
of each month.

County Executive Director

Kathy Y Kozlowski

Farm Loan Manager

James Monroe
231-941-0951 (phone)

County Office Staff

Kathy Johnson

CROP DISASTER PROGRAM 2007 ELIGIBILITY DATE EXTENDED

On December 26, 2007, President George W. Bush signed the Department of State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2008 (2008 Act). The 2008 Act amended the previous February 28, 2007, date and now allows for crops planted prior to December 31, 2007, for the 2007 crop year, to be included for loss purposes under the Crop Disaster Program (CDP).

CDP provides benefits to farmers who suffered 35% Quantity losses to 2005, 2006 or 2007 crops from natural disasters and related conditions. Producers who incurred qualifying losses in 2005, 2006 or 2007 will receive payment for the year in which the benefit is the highest.

Only those producers who obtained crop insurance coverage or coverage under the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) for the year of the loss will be eligible for CDP benefits.

Signup for the 2005-2007 CDP quantity losses began October 15, 2007. No deadline has been determined at this time.

Signup for quality losses will be announced at a future date. A quality loss of 25% or greater is needed to qualify. Details on quality loss provisions will be announced at a later date.

In determining production, participants must supply verifiable and reliable production records to substantiate production to the FSA County Committee. FSA uses RMA (crop insurance) loss records for insured crops where available and determined to be accurate. Harvested production, non-harvested appraised production and assigned production for the total planted acreage of the crop unit is used in determining production under CDP.

CDP requires a 35 percent loss of expected production; therefore you may be eligible under CDP even though it was determined that the loss was not great enough for a payment under NAP or RMA coverage.

LIVESTOCK COMPENSATION PROGRAM

The eligibility date extension also applied to the Livestock Compensation Program (LCP). Losses suffered during 2007 are now being included in this program.

Unlike CDP, you did not have to have insurance to apply for benefits under this program. Producers in primary or contiguous counties declared secretarial disaster areas between January 1, 2005 and December 31, 2007 are eligible to apply.

To be eligible under LCP, livestock must:

be dairy cattle, beef cattle, buffalo, beefalo, equine, poultry, elk, reindeer, sheep, goats, swine or deer that; have been physically located in an eligible county on the beginning date of the applicable disaster period; have been maintained for commercial use as part of a farming operation on the beginning date of the disaster period; and not have been produced and maintained for reasons other than commercial use as part of a farming operation. Such excluded uses include, but are not limited to, wild free roaming animals or animals used for recreational purposes such as pleasure, hunting, pets, roping or for show.

The livestock categories are:

- adult beef cows or bulls;
- non-adult beef cattle, 500 pounds or more;
- adult buffalo or beefalo cows or bulls;
- non-adult buffalo or beefalo, 500 pounds or more
- adult dairy cows or bulls;
- non-adult dairy cattle, 500 pounds or more;
- goats;
- sheep;
- swine – less than 45 pounds
- swine – 45 to 124 pounds
- swine - 125 to 234 pounds
- swine – sow – 235 pounds or more
- swine – boar – 235 pounds or more;
- equine;
- reindeer;
- elk;
- poultry – less than 3 pounds
- poultry – 3 to 7.9 pounds
- poultry – 8 pounds or more;

To be eligible for LCP, producers

must have:

either owned or cash-leased eligible livestock (but not both for the same livestock) on the beginning date of the applicable disaster period(s); and
suffered an eligible feed loss from produced or purchased forage or feedstuffs, or incurred additional feed costs as a result of an eligible disaster event(s) during the applicable disaster period(s)
and the feed lost or additional incurred feed costs
were intended for use with eligible livestock.

Producers incurring a loss in more than one of the 2005, 2006 or 2007 calendar years must choose only one year for which they want to receive benefits.

For More Information

More information about LCP, LIP, CDP is available at the local Farm Service Agency and online at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>; under Disaster Assistance Programs.

NAP COVERAGE DEADLINE

The final deadline for 2008 Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage on annually planted crops is March 15, 2008. If you do not purchase coverage by that date for annual crops or add the annual crops to an existing policy that was purchased last fall on perennial crops; you will not be covered for 2008.

The Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program is available for 2008 annual crops for which catastrophic level crop (CAT) insurance is not available through FCIC. The application fee is \$100.00 per crop or \$300.00 per producer per county.

NAP policies on hay and pasture must be purchased by September 30th prior to the year being covered. For 2009 hay and pasture to be covered the NAP fee must be paid by September 30, 2008.

NAP policies on most fruit crops must be purchased by November 20th prior to the year being covered.

Due to changes in the program provisions it is important for producers to purchase insurance on their crops. If your crops are not insured you will not be eligible for any disaster assistance on those crops.

To remain compliant under NAP, producers must:

- Timely file acreage reports
- Follow HEL and Wetland compliance requirements
- File a Notice of Loss within 15 days of weather damage or within 15 days the loss became apparent
- Request loss adjustment appraisals if the crop will not be harvested or to document production left in the field
- Provide verifiable/reliable production records by the deadline.

For specific crop deadlines or for further information, please contact your local FSA office.

Emergency Loans Available

Antrim and Otsego farmers who suffered significant damage due to Drought in 2007 may be eligible for low-interest emergency loans from the Farm Service Agency if they are unable to get financing from any other source. These loans carry an interest rate of 3.75 percent.

Farmers who suffered a 30% loss in crop production caused by the drought may qualify for Emergency (EM) loan assistance from FSA. Farmers who qualify for an EM loan can also use emergency loan funds to:

- Pay annual operating expenses;
- Pay essential family living expenses;
- Refinance certain debts. (Real estate or consumer debts can not be refinanced with EM loan funds.)
- Replace lost working capital, and/or
- Reorganize the farming operation.

Loan applications will be accepted through July 7, 2008.

Loans for Socially Disadvantaged Applicants

The Farm Service Agency can make direct and guaranteed loans to socially disadvantaged applicants to buy and operate family-size farms and ranches. Funds for these loans are reserved each year.

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.

Direct loans may be made to applicants by FSA for both farm operating and farm ownership loans. Guaranteed farm loans also may be made for ownership or operating purposes, and may be made by any lending institution subject to federal or state supervision (e.g., banks and units of the Farm Credit System) and guaranteed by FSA. FSA typically guarantees 90 or 95 percent of a loan against any loss that might be incurred if the loan fails.

Persons who are primarily and directly engaged in farming and ranching on family-size operations may apply.

Socially disadvantaged loan applicants *do not* receive automatic approval. Individual applicants under this program must meet *all* requirements for FSA's regular farm loan program assistance.

Contact the county office staff or USDA Service Center for more information.

REPORTING CHANGES

It is important to contact the office with any record changes that may have occurred. These changes would include, but are not limited to:

- Address – any contact information should be updated for notification purposes.
- Direct Deposit – to ensure payments are being deposited correctly, it is important that changes in bank account information is updated immediately.
- Development – any new parcels of land removed for houses need to be reported.
- Owner/Operator Changes – report any changes in land ownership, tenants or crop share arrangements.
- Reconstitutions – changes that require farm combinations or separations due to sale of land or change in operators should be reported as soon as possible.
- Farm Operating Plan – any changes to the farming operation that may have an effect on “person” and/or “actively engaged” determinations.
- Update AD-1026 – when you plan to clear, drain, or put tile on existing cropland. Making these changes without prior approval by NRCS can affect all program benefits.

BEWARE OF CROP INSURANCE REBATING SCHEMES

With the spring sales closing date for many Federal crop insurance policies right around the corner, crop insurance agents have stepped up their marketing efforts. The Risk Management Agency (RMA) has received reports from producers and agents that some aggressive marketers have been approaching producers with rebating offers. These schemes promise lower insurance premiums, refunds, dividends, or items of value tied to crop insurance purchases. Most of these activities are illegal. RMA reminds all Federal crop insurance program participants that it is now coordinating with state regulators to take appropriate regulatory action against all those who are found to promote or participate in such schemes. **Producers who are found to participate in illegal rebating activities will not only lose their crop insurance coverage but will also lose eligibility in all USDA programs.** Producers and agents can report suspicions of illegal rebating to the OIG Hotline: 1-800-424-9121.

SPECIAL ACCOMODATIONS

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 directly or by phone.

CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE

Any person who is convicted under federal or state law of 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.

COMMODITY LOAN PROGRAM

Commodity loans are available using harvested crops as collateral. The loan could be used to help with cash flow.

The term of the loan is 9 months. The interest rate is the rate in effect for the month the loan is disbursed, subject to change in January.

The deadline is March 31st for small grains and May 31st for corn, soybeans and sunflowers.

To be eligible the commodity must have been produced by the producer and beneficial interest in the commodity must be maintained through the life of the loan. Beneficial interest is considered to be maintained if the producer has the risk of loss, and title of the commodity. The commodity must be kept in eligible storage and the quality must be maintained. Any quantity of the commodity that will be sold, fed or removed from the designated storage must be repaid before disposition.

For more information, please contact the Farm Service Agency.

COMPLAINT PROCESS

After an 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 four choices – an informal review with the original agency decision-maker, an opportunity for mediation, appeal to the State Committee and appeal to the USDA National Appeal Division (NAD).

CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLAINT PROCESS

Any person, class or group of persons may file a discrimination complaint within 180 days of an alleged discriminatory action. Complaints may be filed in writing or orally with the agency head, any designated agency official or the Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Assistance in filing a complaint can be obtained by calling or visiting any FSA office.

LATEST FARM BILL NEWS

Public information regarding the new Farm Bill is very sketchy. Although speculation is abundant, there is not yet a program to present to producers. With the new bill, any information relating to program payments and provisions will not be available until regulations are written and sign-up is announced. Until then, other program areas directly affected by the farm bill cannot be addressed. Watch for more information in the near future.

County Committee Elections

Congratulations to John Makarewicz, as he was elected to the County Committee (COC). John will be the representative for Local Administrative Area (LAA) #2. LAA #2 consists of Chestonia, Jordan, Star, Mancelona and Warner Townships

During the organizational meeting held January 4th, Mark White was elected the County Committee Chairperson and Barbara Fleming was elected the Vice-Chairperson.

The County Committee plays a vital role in administering the USDA Programs. FSA would like to thank everyone who participated and took the time to vote in the committee elections.

FOREIGN LANDOWNERS REPORTING REQUIREMENT

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 within 90 days of the closing. Failure to submit the AFIDA form could result in civil penalties of up to 25% of the fair market value of the property.

Form FSA-153 is available at the local FSA county office or at: <http://www.sc.egov.usda.gov>.



Dates to Remember	
March 15 th	Final date to purchase NAP coverage on annual crops
March 15 th	Final date to request MAL/LDP on 2008 ungraded wool and mohair.
March 31 st	Final loan/LDP availability date for small grains
May 26 th	Memorial Day. FSA Office Closed.
May 31 st	Final loan/LDP availability date for corn, soybeans and sunflowers
June 30 th	Final date to report fall seeded small grain acreage.
Continues	CRP Continuous
Continues	Farm Storage Facility Loans



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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.