

June 2008

## Gratiot County Farm Service Agency Newsletter

### Gratiot County FSA

301 Commerce Dr.  
Ithaca, MI 48847  
(989) 875-3900 (phone)  
(989) 875-4500 (fax)

### Hours

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

### County Committee

Janet Conn  
Olan Humm  
Charles Humphrey

### Farm Program Staff

Melissa Dettloff  
Janice Helman  
Nancy Holland  
Steve Markley  
Sandy McCrimmon  
Jeff Pearsall  
Kay Perkins

### Field Reporters

Ray Kindel  
Dave Wright

### Farm Loan Staff

Michelle Bailey  
Tim Neuhardt  
Nikki Shelby

### Dates to Remember

#### June 30

Last Day to report fall seeded Crops

#### July 4

Office Closed – Independence Day

#### July 15

Last Day to report spring seeded crops and CRP

#### July 18

Deadline for LCP sign-up

### Ongoing

-Continuous CRP  
-Farm Storage Facility Loans  
-2005-2007 Crop Disaster Program



### Farm Bill News

The House and Senate have agreed on a new 5-year farm bill. MSU-Extension and FSA plan to hold several public meetings jointly to assist in informing producers of the new regulations. Watch closely for press releases and newsletters announcing sign-up for 2008 and 2009, as it appears the Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program rules will apply for 2008 while 2009 sign-up will operate under the new farm bill guidelines. FSA will attempt to get out any information as soon as possible.

### CRP Cover Maintenance

**Attention Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) participants:** cover maintenance is your responsibility and must be done according to your conservation plan. Mowing for cosmetic purposes or general weed control is not allowed and will result in financial penalties. Mowing maintenance activities may be allowed once per year, only if it's needed to maintain the approved cover, and only on the portion of CRP in need of maintenance. Mowing is permitted between August 1<sup>st</sup> and August 20<sup>th</sup> to protect ground-nesting wildlife and to allow adequate re-growth for winter cover. **Producers may request permission to perform maintenance activities outside the specified timeframe, but each request has to be approved by the COC on a case-by-case basis. Plan ahead and contact the FSA office prior to conducting any maintenance on your CRP acres.**

All 2008 requests to mow will be reviewed by the COC. Mowing on an annual basis is not an acceptable method of weed and woody growth control. The COC has the right to deny maintenance requests if previous mowing has not adequately solved the problem. Spraying a herbicide may be a viable option, but approval must be requested in writing and granted by the COC **BEFORE** you begin the maintenance activity.

### CROP DISASTER PROGRAM

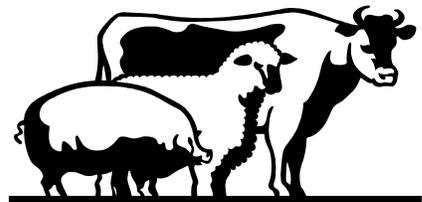
Since our last newsletter in January, a large change has taken place with the Crop Disaster Program (CDP). The program now includes all losses incurred for the entire 2007 crop year. Producers who suffered crop losses due to damaging weather or other related conditions for the crop years of 2005, 2006, and 2007 are now eligible. Please keep in mind, **only producers who obtained crop insurance coverage or NAP for the year of loss will be eligible for CDP benefits.** Losses must be in excess of 35% for quantity and/or 25% for quality losses.

You may be eligible for a payment even if it was determined that the loss was not great enough to obtain compensation under the Non-insured Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) or Crop Insurance coverage. Qualifying losses will be paid in the one year (2005, 2006, or 2007) which is most beneficial to the producer.

Signup for 2005-2007 CDP is ongoing with no deadline at this time. Please contact this office for more details.

### Livestock Compensation Program

As stated in our last newsletter, Livestock Compensation Program (LCP) is part of this disaster legislation. LCP compensates producers for certain types of feed losses and increased feed costs resulting from natural disasters occurring between **January 1, 2005 and December 31, 2007**. Producers must choose only one year to receive benefits - 2005, 2006, or 2007. **The deadline for sign-up is July 18, 2008.** Please contact this office for more details.



## **Changing to a New Map System**

We have been involved in a time-consuming process for the last two years converting our maps to a Geographical Information System (GIS). This process will become our normal business process for all work we perform with maps. We are nearing **Stage 2**, which is mailing maps to you to verify the field boundaries and data are correct.



## **County Office Maps Have a New Look**

The maps will be mailed by tract number. You will no longer be able to see all the land in an entire township section. The software adjusts the size of the fields to fit the allocated map size. In some cases, small fields may be made so large that you can no longer verify boundaries. At the bottom of each map is a legend which contains data about the map: county data, farm number, tract number, etc. Due to a recent agency update, the following information has been added to the field/tract description: **HEL** = highly erodible, **NHEL** = not highly erodible, or **blank** = undetermined HEL. Wetlands are marked with the following symbols: **red circle** = Restricted Use; **yellow triangle** = Limited Restrictions; **green square** = Exempt from Conservation Compliance Provisions. You should contact our office with any questions on Wetland labels or if you receive a distorted map.

## **What Are You Verifying**

Please review these maps to make sure your boundaries and data are correct. This includes if you have sold property, acquired new farmland, taken ground out of production for houses/buildings or no longer farm an area. At this time, we want to ensure field boundaries and data are correct. Acres can not be disputed, but can be used as a tool to help you identify possible boundary errors. Please keep in mind there is always the potential for human error. If you notice that a land determination was not transferred (such as Wetland or HEL determination) to the new map, please contact the office. We would like these maps as correct as possible to avoid violations.

## **Who Will Receive Maps**

Each owner and operator who is currently attached to the tract will be mailed a map with a letter giving 30 days to address any needed corrections. To make this process easier, most operators will receive all maps at the same time with a listing of the farms and owners to be used as a reference for the maps. Owners may receive maps separately if there is more than one operator connected to their land. This would also include situations where an individual is owner and operator on CRP but rents the remainder of the cropland to someone else.

## **When Will You Receive Maps**

It will take an extensive amount of time to print maps, but all maps will be mailed by August 31<sup>st</sup>.

## **Map Data**

Remember, you are seeing a copy of the old map we've always used but it has now been loaded in the computer.

## **Correcting Field Boundaries**

**Stage 3** is correcting field boundaries and data. You will need to visit the office if you determine a boundary line or the data is incorrect. We are asking that you bring the map back to the office with the proper documentation as described in the letter. We will make a copy of your map and note any boundary discrepancies. Once all owners and operators have received their maps, we will begin making map corrections.

## **When Will the New Maps Become Effective?**

Please keep in mind that any changes made to these maps are not immediately effective. **This project is entirely separate from the maps and the farm records we are currently using for program purposes.** **Stage 4:** The acres from the new maps will be activated and used for all 2009 programs.

## **Crop Certification**

Map changes will not affect 2008 programs or crop certification. After you plant your 2008 crops, you will certify your crops using the same maps with the same acres we have used for the last 10 years.

## **Program Changes**

Both CRP contracts and farm base acres could be affected by the updated map acres. **Stage 5** will be adjusting the contract data to match the new farm records data. Currently, we cannot determine if your farms will be affected. Please watch future newsletters for any updates on this process.

## **COC Election Information**

One of FSA's responsibilities is to conduct County Committee elections in an open manner that ensures accountability. FSA will provide local organizations representing socially disadvantaged groups with detailed information about the COC election process. The agency is reaching out to agricultural communities to get equitable representation on their county committees.

Groups representing socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, will be actively solicited for COC election candidates, and encouraged to fill out a nomination form (FSA-669A). Under-represented farmers and ranchers are encouraged to step up and participate in their county's COC election process. Producers will notice posters and announcements displayed in businesses, churches, and other public places. COC election fact sheets and nomination forms can be found online at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA> under the News & Events tab on the FSA homepage. Nomination forms are also available at the Gratiot FSA Service Center.

**Agriculture producers in LAA 1** (Arcada, Bethany, Pine River, Seville, and Sumner Townships) **will be voting for their representative on the Gratiot County Committee.** Janet Conn currently represents LAA 1, but has reached her term limit and is unable to run in this election.

The nomination period begins June 15, 2008. Nomination forms must be postmarked or received by FSA no later than August 1, 2008

***Make a Difference: Nominate and Vote!***

## **2008 Crop Certification Reminders**

Producers are reminded that crop acreage reporting continues to play an important role through the FSA Offices and RMA Offices. Certification of crop acreages is needed to maintain farm history which may determine eligibility in future farm programs including the Conservation programs administered by FSA. Acreage reports must be filed timely. Those deadlines are:

- **June 30th** for fall seeded crops.
- **July 15th** for spring seeded crops.

Planting dates are also a requirement at the time of acreage reporting.

- Call today for an appointment -



### **Failed Acreage Provisions**

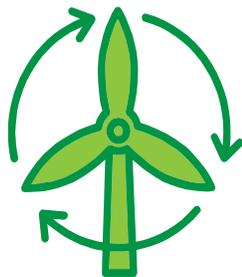
Farm Service Agency procedure states that you must report failed acreage at the time of disaster occurrence. Acreage reports for failed acreage must be filed before the crop is destroyed and must be approved by the County Committee. The report protects farm history and allows FSA to reconcile acreage requests from Risk Management Agency (Crop Insurance). Please file any potential crop losses and/or failed crop acreage timely.

### **Prevented Planting Provisions**

Crops prevented from being planted must be reported to FSA within 15 days of the final planting date to ensure eligibility and to maintain crop history. The following lists the final planting dates:

- **Wheat** - October 25<sup>th</sup>
- **Oats** - May 20<sup>th</sup>
- **Corn** - June 5<sup>th</sup>
- **Soybeans** - June 15<sup>th</sup>
- **Dry Edible Beans** - June 25<sup>th</sup>

## ***Wind Turbines***



Many producers throughout Gratiot County have been contacted concerning the potential economic benefits landowners may expect from wind energy, and more directly, the possibility of erecting wind turbines on agricultural land. The growing interest in this venture has even been fueled by the prospect of placing wind-monitoring towers and wind turbines on CRP acreage. According to FSA procedure, wind turbines and wind-monitoring towers may be erected on CRP acreage but only on a case by case basis requiring COC approval. Questions regarding wind turbines and their placement on your farm, whether or not the cropland is enrolled in CRP, should be directed to the FSA office.

Gratiot County FSA Office  
301 Commerce Dr.  
Ithaca, MI 48847



PRESORTED STANDARD  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
LANSING, MI  
PERMIT NO. 19

### **Farm Loan Programs**

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers loans for farmers and ranchers to purchase farmland and finance agricultural operations. FSA loan programs are designed to help producers who are temporarily unable to obtain private or commercial credit. In many cases, applicants are beginning farmers who have insufficient net worth to qualify for financing through a commercial lender. In other instances, borrowers might have suffered setbacks from natural disasters or might be persons with limited resources.

Farm ownership loans or farm operating loans may be obtained as direct loans for a maximum of up to \$200,000. Guaranteed loans can reach a maximum indebtedness of \$949,000. Emergency loans are always direct loans for farmers who may have suffered physical or production losses in disaster areas designated by a Presidential or Secretarial disaster declaration. Rural Youth Loans, Loans to Beginning Farmers and loans for socially disadvantaged applicants are also available through FSA.

For detail information loan eligibility or the different available loan programs, contact the county office staff for an appointment with a farm loan officer.

### **Attention Producers Requesting Reconstitutions!**

If you are requesting a reconstitution for the 2008 crop year, you may see changes in the way it is processed. According to FSA reconstitution procedure, farms with the same owner and same operator must be combined. ***For example, if you operate a farm owned by one person and that person purchases another farm which you will also operate, our office is required to combine those two farms.*** This provision fits more than this one example. Because it is policy, any farms that are currently operated in such a manner will eventually be combined into a single farm number. If you have questions about this or any other type of reconstitution, please speak to a member of our staff.

#### *Non-Discrimination Statement*

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, SW., Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.