



Hillsdale County FSA News

Hillsdale County USDA Service Center

Hillsdale FSA

588 Olds St. Bldg 2
Jonesville, MI 49250
Phone 517 849-9890 X 2
FAX 517 849-9895

Hours

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

County Committee

Tom Schroeder, Chairman
Sheryl Kies, Vice-Chair
David Godfrey, Member

Commodity Staff

Nina Draper, CRP
Cindy Gabbard, Price Sup
Angela Lanus, Crop Rept
Pattie Nichols, Adm
Jamie Horeni, New Prog.
Judy Hostetler, CED

Farm Loan Staff

Candice Alexander
Deb Parkhurst, Fm Loans
Mack Francoeur, FLO
Russ LaFollette, Loan Mgr

Web Sites

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov>
<http://www.sc.egov.usda.gov>
<http://www.usda.gov>



County Committee Election Results

Congratulations to Thomas Schroeder who was re-elected to represent farmers from Reading, Cambria, Camden, Woodbridge, Ransom and Amboy Townships. This is Tom's second term as a County Committee Member. The County Committee meets in regular session the second Tuesday of every month at 8:30 am at the FSA Office. These regular sessions are open to the public.

Clearing Land? Attention!!!!

- Are you clearing fence rows to expand cropland for more corn?
- Are you clearing woods or scrub brush to expand cropland?
- Are you intending to crop areas that have not been cropped in the last several years?
- Are you converting a pasture field into a crop field?
- Are you draining a wet area with the intention to crop it?

To remain eligible for USDA benefits the following items must be followed:

- **Not** produce an agricultural commodity on wetlands converted after December 23, 1985.
- **Not** convert wetlands to allow planting of any agricultural commodity.
- **Not** plant agricultural commodities on highly erodible fields unless actively applying an approved conservation plan.

If you have any questions that something you plan to do could jeopardize your eligibility, please contact your NRCS or FSA conservation person. With farmers attempting to obtain more cropland, check the status of the soil for conservation compliance before planting new acreage. Most FSA programs require compliance with sodbuster and swampbuster provisions.

No New Farm Bill Yet.

The Annual DCP Program expired September 30, 2007 and No New Farm Bill has been passed as yet to take its place. Congress extended the 2002 Farm Bill until April 18, 2008. All this means for FSA producers is that you may sign up for Continuous CRP contracts and/or Wool LDPs thru April 18, 2008. As soon as any new information is received regarding a new farm bill or extension of the 2002 Farm Bill for one year, I will publicize the information as soon as possible.

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. FSA 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. County government offices, realtors, attorneys and others involved in real estate transactions are reminded to notify foreign investors of these reporting requirements.

Wool and Mohair LDPs

The 2008 crop year for wool and mohair began January 1st. Marketing assistance loans and loan deficiency payments (LDPs) are available for 2008 wool and mohair.

Make sure you have a CCC-633EZ on file before you lose beneficial interest in your 2008 Wool. You can obtain this form online or from our office.



Selected Interest Rates for March 2007	
90-Day Treasury Bill	3.125%
Farm Operating Loans-Direct	3.75%
Farm Ownership Loans-Direct	4.875%
Farm Ownership Loans-Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	4%
Emergency Loans	3.75%
Farm Storage Facility Loans	3.125%
Commodity Loans	3.125%

Conservation Reserve Program State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (Safe for Short)

Signup for this new program is anticipated to begin July 1, 2008. Hillsdale County has been approved for plantings of Diverse Grassland habitats to restore ecosystems for grassland dependant wildlife such as Bobolinks, eastern box turtles, hog-nosed snakes, grasshopper sparrows, karner blue butterflies, barn owls, short eared owls, upland sandpipers, western meadowlarks, etc. Historically, oak savanna and prairie dominated much of the lower peninsula. Remnant natural areas are surrounded by agriculture and urban land uses, resulting in severe habitat fragmentation. Almost all of the original tall grass and wet prairies have been converted to farmland. Savannas are native grasslands with scattered trees or shrubs. By requiring planting of oaks within short-grass plantings, this will increase the availability of acorns as a food source for many species of wildlife. Requirements are as follows:

- Habitat blocks are a minimum of 30 acres in size
- Linear corridors a minimum 200' wide and at least 10 acres in size.
- Grassland types must be a minimum of 30% short prairie grass such as little bluestem, Canada wild rye and a max. of 70% tall grass prairie such as big bluestem, Indian grass, switch grass
- Other seed mixes may be allowed based on the unique soil type and/or topography.

With almost 4000 acres expiring this year from CRP, those participants may want to check these practices. **These practices will take the place of a general CRP sign-up this year.**

Farm Storage Facility Loans

Low interest loans are available for producers to purchase grain bins, handling equipment and other grain storage equipment. The seven year loans can be used not only for the purchase but construction of the equipment, including drying equipment and remodeling of existing facilities.

The current interest rate for March is 3.125% for the life of the loan. Loan installments are made annually over a period of 7 years. All farm storage facility loans are secured by a promissory note and security agreement. For loans exceeding \$50,000 or where a borrower's aggregate outstanding loan balance exceeds \$50,000 a lien on real estate will be required. The maximum amount that may be borrowed is 85% of the net cost of the equipment up to \$100,000 for each borrower. A minimum down payment of 15% is required.

2005-2007 Crop Disaster Program

CDP provides benefits to farmers who suffered at least a 35% quantity loss to 2005 or 2006 or 2007 crops. Producers who incurred qualifying losses in any of these three years will receive payment for the one year in which the benefit is the highest. **Only producers who obtained crop insurance coverage or coverage under the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) for the year of loss will be eligible for CDP benefits.**

- Sign-up began October 15, 2007. No deadline has been set at this time.
- FSA uses RMA loss records for insured crop acreages and production
- For NAP crops, producers must provide verifiable and reliable production records.

Common Land Unit (CLU)

The Hillsdale FSA staff is continuing to work on correcting the CLU maps and updating Farm Records. We are making good progress and appreciate your patience during this long and detailed process. Some records are accurate and need very little adjustment, however others need considerable adjusting. We are making the corrections on a farm by farm basis. All landowners and operators will receive new maps in July or August.

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. Dept of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Assistance in filing a complaint can be obtained by calling any FSA Office.



Special Accommodations

Special Accommodations will be made for the physically handicapped, visually impaired or hearing impaired upon request. If accommodation is required, contact Judy Hostetler, CED at (517) 849-9890.



Reporting Crop Acreages

Acreage reporting time will soon be here. Please remember that filing an accurate acreage report for all crops and land uses including failed acreage and prevented planting acreage, can prevent the loss of benefits for a variety of programs. Producers are required to report their planted crops and acres to FSA in order to maintain eligibility for several program benefits:

- Commodity Loans and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs)
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Annual Rental Payments
- Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) Payments

The deadline to report fall-seeded small grains is July 1, 2008. The deadline to report all other crops is July 15, 2008.

Crop reports on Form FSA-578, Report of Commodities must account for all cropland on a farm, whether idle or planted. We will be mailing out a list of all the farms our records show the producer is associated with. In addition we will mail the aerial photocopies out. We ask producers to write what crop is planted in each field, including alfalfa, or grass and idle land. If partial fields are planted, indicate the acres of each parcel. If sharing, indicate percent and with whom. The planting dates are needed for RMA. Mail back or drop the photos off to our office a minimum of three days prior to any appointment. After they are dropped off, we load them into the computer and prepare the FSA-578 for signing. Producers can make an appointment to stop in and sign them or have them mailed to them for signing and then return them to the office by the deadline. This process helps shorten the time the producer spends in the office.

Measurement Service Rate Changes

Measurement Service Fees for farm visits have changed to a minimum of \$46.00 for the first hour and \$8 for every 30 minutes after the first hour. The rate includes time for travel and paperwork completion. This will also be the fee for late acreage reports. This fee is by farm so producers will especially want to report their acreage by the deadline date to avoid these fees. This includes CRP acreage reports. Please take note of these changes.

FSA Farm Loans

FSA makes both direct and guaranteed farm ownership and operating loans to family-size farmers who can not obtain commercial credit from a bank or other lender. FSA loans can be used to purchase land, livestock equipment, feed, seed, and supplies. The loans can also be used to construct buildings or make farm improvements. If you're having trouble getting commercial credit, check with the county office staff about eligibility, as well as maximum loan amounts, rates, term and use of proceeds.

Loans Available for Beginning Farmers, Socially Disadvantaged

FSA is authorized to assist beginning farmers and members of socially disadvantaged groups to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmers as a person whom:

Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years. Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm. Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA. Does not own a farm in excess of 30% of the county's average size.

Youth Loans

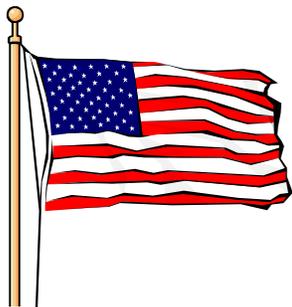
FSA can make loans to youths to establish and operate income producing projects in connection with their participation in 4-H clubs, Future Farmers of America, and similar organizations. **The maximum loan size is \$5,000.** To qualify:

- Be between 10 and 20 years old
- Live in a town of less than 10,000
- Be unable to obtain a loan from other sources
- Conduct a modest income producing project in a supervised program of work.

Applicants must also be capable of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. Contact Russ LaFollette or Mack Francoeur at Ext. 107 or Ext 105

Unauthorized Disposition

Loan grain is not to be disposed of through feeding, selling, or any other form of disposal without prior written authorization. The financial penalties for this are severe. Always call the office before any loan grain is fed or sold.



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 have to wait in the office.

We appreciate your patience and remember farm safety this spring!

Judy Hostettler, CED

**Farm Changes—Remember to notify our office of any farm changes:
Changes in land ownership, new leased acreage, dropped leased acreage;
Changes in banking accounts that will affect your *direct deposit*;
Development of land removed for houses.**

Important Dates to Remember

Mar 31 Deadline for Small Grain Loans and LDPs
May 13 COC Mtg
May 26 Office Closed – Memorial Day
May 31 Deadline for Large Grain Loans and LDPs
June 10 COC Meeting Date
July 1 Deadline to report small grains
July 4 Office Closed-Independence Day
July 8 COC Meeting Date
July 15 Deadline to report spring seeded crops
Aug 1 Deadline to request Recons
Aug 12 COC Meeting Date
Continues CREP and Continuous CRP

Real Estate for Sale Visit the following web site for government owned farms, houses, lots & buildings.
<http://www.resales.usda.gov>

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