



Van Buren/Kalamazoo Farm Service Agency
NEWSLETTER

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FSA Website
http://www.fsa.usda.gov/

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



BUY-IN WAIVER FOR SUPPLEMENTAL AGRICULTURAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

FSA will allow producers who would otherwise be ineligible for the new disaster assistance programs to become eligible by paying a fee as required by the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (the 2008 Act).

The 2008 Act requires producers who wish to participate in the new disaster programs to have crop insurance or non-insured crop disaster assistance (NAP) coverage for the land for which assistance is being requested, and for all farms in all counties in which they have an interest. Since the 2008 Act was enacted after the application periods had closed for those programs, producers who did not have such coverage could not comply with this requirement in order to be eligible for the new disaster programs. However, the 2008 Act authorizes a waiver that allows producers to pay a fee, called a "buy-in" fee, to be eligible for this new disaster assistance.

Every producer whose crops, including grazing lands, are not fully covered by crop insurance or NAP may take advantage of this one-time opportunity. The buy-in fee is due no later than Sept. 16, 2008, 90 days after the date of enactment, as required by the 2008 Act. Those who miss this opportunity will not be eligible for disaster assistance. Producers are also reminded that the payment of the applicable buy-in fee does not afford the producer crop insurance or NAP coverage; it only affords eligibility for the 2008 disaster programs.

The crop insurance and NAP coverage requirements will be waived in 2008 for producers who did not obtain crop insurance

or NAP coverage by the applicable sales closing date, if the producer files an application for waiver and pays a buy-in fee in an amount equal to the 2008 applicable NAP coverage or catastrophic risk protection plan fee for the crop or grazing lands.

Producers who meet the definition of "Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource," or "Beginning Farmer or Rancher," do not have to meet the Risk Management Purchase Requirement, and, therefore, are not required to pay the buy-in fee.

The buy-in fee for 2008 eligibility only for either the catastrophic risk protection insurance (CAT) or NAP is \$100 per crop, but not more than \$300 per producer per administrative county, or \$900 total per producer for all counties less any previously paid fees for CAT and/or NAP. Producers can contact their local administrative FSA County Office to file the application for waiver and pay the applicable fees.

The applicable buy-in form must be completed and applicable fees paid by September 16, 2008. Payment of the applicable fees will allow the producer to be eligible for benefits for losses under the forthcoming Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments (SURE) Program, Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP), Tree Assistance Program (TAP), and Emergency Assistance Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP).

COUNTY COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS DUE BY AUG. 1st

Producers are reminded that they have until Aug. 1, 2008, to nominate eligible candidates to serve on local FSA county committees. Contact your local office for a nominating petition.

DIRECT & COUNTER-CYCLICAL PAYMENT SIGNUP UNDERWAY

Signup began June 25, 2008, for the 2008 Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program (DCP), which helps deliver certainty for the crop year and the option of a timely advance payment. Signup will continue until September 30, 2008.



USDA computes DCP 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 2008, eligible producers may request to receive an advance payment of 22 percent of the direct payment for each commodity associated with the farm. USDA will issue advance direct payments as soon as practical after enrollment. Final direct payments will be issued after Oct. 1, 2008. Counter-cyclical payments vary depending on market prices, and are issued only when the effective price for a commodity is below its target price (which takes into account the direct payment rate, market price and loan rate).

Contact your local FSA office to schedule an appointment to enroll in the 2008 DCP.

ATTENTION NAP PRODUCERS WHO HAVE HAY/FORAGE CROPS:

If you have a NAP policy for your forage crop(s), you are responsible for:

- notifying the County Office BEFORE grazing or abandoning forage acreage reported as "intended to be mechanically harvested",
- establishing representative sample areas, when an appraisal of the acreage is required,
- informing County Office of location of sample areas within 15 calendar days of placement,
- requesting appraisal of sample areas at end of harvest period, but BEFORE first freeze,
- maintaining separate production records for EACH OF THE FOLLOWING: acreage intended to be mechanically harvested AND acreage intended to be grazed, but that were actually mechanically harvested,
- requesting a measurement service to identify and measure the quantity of mechanically harvested production from forage acreage reported as "intended to be grazed", and
- timely filing a Notice of Loss in writing at the County Office within the 15 day deadline.



PRICE INCREASE FOR 2009 NAP COVERAGE

Any 2009 NAP crops with sales closing dates after May 22, 2008, such as perennial crops (forage and fruit) and small grains will be under the 2009 service fee pricing which is \$250 per crop, \$750 maximum per county, and \$1875 maximum per producer for all counties.

CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE VIOLATIONS

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, cultivating, growing, producing, harvesting or storing a prohibited plant such as marijuana, opium poppies or other drug-producing plants prohibited by Federal or state law.

Program participants convicted of any Federal or state offense consisting of the distribution (trafficking) or the possession of a controlled substance shall, at the discretion of the court, be ineligible for any or all program payments and benefits.

RURAL YOUTH LOANS AVAILABLE

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency (FSA) makes operating loans of up to \$5,000 to eligible individual rural youths age 10 through 20 to finance income-producing, agriculture-related projects. The project must be of modest size, educational, and initiated, developed and carried out by rural youths participating in 4-H clubs, FFA or a similar organization.



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 in agriculture-related skills.

Kalamazoo County producers should contact Phillip DeYoung at 269-781-4263 and Van Buren County producers should contact William Hogan at 269-657-7055 to make application.

MICHIGAN STATE ACRES FOR WILDLIFE ENHANCEMENT (CRP-SAFE) PROGRAM

On March 22, 2007, FSA announced a new initiative, SAFE, to allow states to address local wildlife conservation needs. SAFE allows producers to install practices that benefit high priority State wildlife conservation objectives through the use of targeted restoration of vital habitat. This cooperative conservation effort is based on locally developed conservation proposals that address the highest priority wildlife objectives in the state before the practice may be implemented.

Available Michigan practices are as follows:



Diverse Grassland Planting (Kalamazoo, St. Joseph, Barry, Calhoun & Branch Counties)

A Diverse Grassland planting consists of a mixture of planted short or tall native grasses and wildflowers reminiscent of the short and tall grass prairies that once were common in southern Michigan. A subset of the short grass planting is a savanna, which includes scattered clumps of planted oak trees. This SAFE project is intended to re-establish the diverse grasslands that have nearly been eliminated from the Michigan landscape, and provide food and cover for a variety of birds, mammals and insects that are dependent on these systems. Native grasslands are considered one of the most threatened plant communities in Michigan.

To be eligible for this SAFE practice, the land must be located in the SAFE project target area that includes 18 counties in the southern lower peninsula of Michigan. The land must have a cropping history (cropped 4 out of the 6 years from 1996-2001) and be either a block of 30 acres or greater in size or, if a linear habitat, be a minimum of 200 feet wide and 10 acres or greater in size. Landowners with previously existing CRP enrolled acres may enroll additional contiguous acres that meet the above criteria under SAFE agreements.

The diverse grassland planting must include a short grass prairie component that includes planting of clusters of oak trees, and may include a tall grass prairie component. Between 30% and 100% of the total acres must be planted to short grass prairie. In addition, native oak trees must be planted on at least 10% but not more than 30% of these short grass prairie acres at a rate of 4 trees per acre. In all cases, oak trees will be planted on at least 2 acres.

Maintenance activities are allowed only on a spot basis and only if necessary to maintain stand health or diversity or to control pests that will damage the cover or adjacent lands. Mowing for generic weed control or for cosmetic purposes is prohibited. Livestock must be barred from the planting. All Diverse Grassland SAFE contracts must have mid-term contract management activities scheduled that are site specific and will ensure plant diversity, wildlife habitat, and protection of soil and water resources.

Pollinator Habitat Planting (Van Buren, Kalamazoo, Berrien, Cass, Allegan & Barry Counties)

A Pollinator Habitat planting consists of native shrubs, grasses and/or wildflowers which provide cover, nectar and pollen for native pollinators, including a wide range of insects such as bees, beetles, butterflies and moths, as well as birds. Pollinators provide a very important ecological service: Approximately three-quarters of all flowering plants rely on animals to pollinate their flowers. In addition to agricultural crops such as fruits and vegetables, pollinators aid seed-producing wildflowers, fruit-producing shrubs and nut-producing trees which provide a source of food for many wildlife species.



To be eligible for this SAFE practice, the land must be located in the SAFE project target area that includes 18 counties in the southern lower peninsula of Michigan. The land must have a cropping history (cropped 4 out of the 6 years from 1996-2001) and/or be part of a working orchard or vineyard. These plantings may consist of a block or border planting, whole field planting or a field border planting. The installed practice must be a minimum of 2 acres in size with a minimum width of 100 feet.



All Pollinator Habitat SAFE contracts must have mid-term contract management activities scheduled that are site-specific and will ensure plant diversity, wildlife habitat, and protection of soil and water resources. Management practices such as prescribed burning or disking and interseeding will be conducted every 4 years to promote wildflower plantings.

Maintenance activities are allowed only on a spot basis and only if necessary to maintain stand health or diversity or to control pests that will damage the cover or adjacent lands. Mowing for generic weed control or for cosmetic purposes is prohibited. Livestock must be barred from the planting.

In addition to benefitting pollinators, these mixtures will provide winter and nesting cover and food for a variety of wildlife, including grassland birds. Abundant insects in addition to pollinators will provide a food source for broods.

Contracts are a 10 to 15 years commitment. In return participants will receive an annual per acre rental payment. In addition, the program will pay up to 100 percent of the cost of establishing the necessary diverse grassland planting and 90 percent for the native pollinator planting along with a \$10 per acre, per year, signing bonus.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
 VAN BUREN FARM SERVICE AGENCY
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PRESORTED STANDARD
 U.S. POSTAGE PAID
 LANSING, MI
 PERMIT NO. 19

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

- August 1 COC Nominating Petition Deadline
- August 15 Deadline to Report 2008 Crops
- September 1 Labor Day Holiday – Offices Closed
- September 16 Deadline to Purchase Buy-in Waiver for Disaster Programs
- September 30 Deadline to Enroll in 2008 DCP
- September 30 Deadline to Purchase NAP Coverage for Alfalfa, Mixed Forage, Rye and Mint
- October 13 Columbus Day Holiday – Offices Closed
- Ongoing SAFE Program Enrollment
- Ongoing CRP Continuous Signup
- Ongoing Farm Storage Facility Loans

eGOV CUSTOMER REGISTRATION PROCESS

1. Access your website of interest:
 - USDA Customer Statement <http://customerstatement.usda.gov>
 - Electronic LDP Signup http://www.fsa.usda.gov/egov/eldp_default.htm
 - Electronic DCP Signup http://www.fsa.usda.gov/egov/edcp_default.htm
2. Create an online user profile and apply for Level 2 access
3. Respond to the verification email within 7 days of receipt.
4. Visit the County Office in person and provide photo identification to the Local Registration Authority in order to receive Level 2 Activation.
5. Access Level 2 applications within 1 hour after profile has been activated.

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 their local County Office in person or by phone.

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