



June 2012

County Committee Nominations

Maine State FSA Office

Donovan E. Todd
State Executive Director

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Hours

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

Maine FSA Staff

Deborah J. Dufour,
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Ken Gustin,
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William E. Jordan,
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Maine State Committee

Annie Allen, Chair
Anthony Carroll
Jackie Lundeen
Sandra Nutting
Ralph Turner

The election of agricultural producers to Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees is important to ALL farmers and ranchers. It is crucial that every eligible producer participate in these elections because FSA county committees are a link between the agricultural community and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

County committee members are a critical component of the operations of FSA. They help deliver FSA farm programs at the local level. Farmers and ranchers who serve on county committees help with the decisions necessary to administer the programs in their counties. They work to ensure FSA agricultural programs serve the needs of local producers.

FSA county committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws. County committee members apply their judgment and knowledge to make local decisions.

The COC nomination period runs from June 15, 2012 through Aug. 1, 2012. For more information contact your local FSA office.

Nomination forms can be found at: <http://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov/efcommon/eFileServices/eForms/FSA669-A.PDF>.

From the Desk of the State Director:

don.todd@me.usda.gov

The People's Gardens across the country vary in size and in type but all must have the 3 necessary components: to benefit the community, they must be collaborative, and they must incorporate sustainable practices. There are more than 1500 People's Gardens that are in all 50 states, 3 U.S. territories and 11 foreign countries. All produce grown at the People's Gardens on USDA owned or leased land is donated to help those in need.



Here at the Maine State Office we kicked off our People's Garden last Friday, May 18, 2012. Employees from each agency worked together to work all the soil, add manure and prepare it for planting. SED Todd volunteered his "tiller" and his time to shape this garden into what we are hoping will be the most successful in the last 3 years of participation. The current plan is to have tomatoes, cucumbers, zucchini, summer squash and cabbage.

Garden donations are made to Manna Ministries in Bangor.

Payment Limitations

Anyone who plans to participate in 2012 programs is required to submit a completed CCC-902, CCC-926, and CCC-901, if applicable, for payment eligibility and payment limitation purposes. The form used previously was called a CCC-502.

Contributions:

All partners, stockholders or members with an ownership interest in the legal entity must make a contribution, whether compensated or **not** compensated, for active--*

- personal labor,
- active personal management,
- or a combination of active personal labor and active personal management to the farming operation.*

*Note: there are exceptions for spouses.

Hispanic and Women Farmers

A process to resolve the claims of Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers who believe they were discriminated against when seeking USDA farm loans has been established.

If you believe that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) improperly denied farm loan benefits to you between 1981 and 2000 because you are Hispanic, or because you are female, you may be eligible to apply for compensation.

For additional information on this and other settlement issues contact:

Hispanic and Women Farmer Claims Process:

www.farmerclaims.gov or call 1-888-508-4429

Pigford – The Black Farmers Discrimination Litigation:

www.blackfarmercase.com or call 1-866-950-5547

Keepseagle – The Native American Farmers Class Action Settlement:

www.IndianFarmClass.com or call 1-888-233-5506

Compliance

Compliance and spot checks will be utilized during the 2012 crop year. Instead of locally selecting farms, contracts, deficiency loans, etc. for spot check and review, a nationwide selection of producers is used to achieve a statistical sampling of participating producers. Spot check selections are to be conducted based on a producer's participation in the Conservation Reserve Program, Direct and Counter-cyclical Program, Loan Deficiency Program, etc.

DCP-ACRE Sign-Up

2012 Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP) enrollment ran from Jan. 23, 2012 through June 1, 2012. Here are some IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

- All producers planting on **DCP base** acres must be identified on the DCP/ACRE contract and receive a proportionate share of DCP/ACRE payment for the farm.
- Changes on the farm after enrolling June 1st in DCP/ACRE **must** be reported to your local FSA office such as:
 - Ownership changes
 - Producer changes (Individuals and Entities)
 - Change in crop shares arrangements
 -

Note: Changes cannot be made after Sept. 30, 2012.

Dates to Remember

July 15	Acreage Reporting
July 15	NAP production reporting deadline for 2011 production.

Farm Service Agency Announces Accepted CRP Offers in Maine

FSA State Director, Don Todd announced that 1,075.2 acres were accepted during the 43rd Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) general signup, bringing the total number of active CRP acres in Maine to 13,578.2.

"For more than 25 years, CRP has protected natural resources in Maine while providing economic and environmental benefits to rural communities throughout the state," said Todd. "The newly accepted CRP offers will continue the CRP legacy by improving water and air quality, increasing wildlife habitat and preventing soil erosion," he said.

Landowners enrolled in CRP receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving covers on eligible farmland. Accepted contracts will become effective October 1, 2012.

According to Todd, during 2011, CRP acres reduced nitrogen losses from farm fields by 623 million pounds and phosphorus losses by 124 million pounds. CRP has also restored more than two million acres of wetlands and associated buffers and reduces soil erosion by more than 300 million tons per year nationwide.



USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Stop 9410, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call toll-free at (866) 632-9992 (English) or (800) 877-8339 (TDD) or (866) 377-8642 (English Federal-relay) or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish Federal-relay).

Gov Delivery

The USDA Farm Service Agency offices are moving toward a paperless operation. Producers are asked to enroll in the new GovDelivery system which will provide notices, newsletters and electronic reminders instead of a hard copy through the mail.

FSA, like many other organizations, is trying to work smarter and be more efficient. Moving to electronic notifications via email will help conserve resources and save taxpayer dollars. County Committee ballots will continue to be mailed to all eligible producers.

Producers can subscribe to receive free e-mail updates by going to <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/subscribe>.

Changing Banks

Almost all Farm Service Agency payments are made electronically using Direct Deposit.

To keep the system running smoothly, it's critical to keep the county office staff up to date on changes you might make in your financial institutions.

If you have changed accounts or institutions that might affect the direct deposit of your FSA payments, contact the FSA county office so we can update our files to insure continued uninterrupted service.

FSA Signature Policy

Husbands and wives may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and Commodity Credit Corporation programs in which either has an interest. This option is automatically available unless a written request for exclusion is made to the county office staff by either spouse.

There are exceptions to the rule, where spouses may not sign on behalf of each other for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations or other similar entities.

Individual signatures are also required on certain Farm Loan Program and Farm Storage Facility Loan documents.

For more clarification on spousal signature authority, feel free to contact your local FSA office.

Microloan Operating Loans

On May 25th the proposed rule for our new Microloan Operating Loan was published in the Federal Register. This rule proposes to modify the Operating Loan application, eligibility and security requirements for Microloans in amounts up to \$35,000 that would serve the unique operating needs of very small family farm operations. This rule change would make the Operating Loan Program more widely available and attractive to smaller operators through reduced application requirements, more timely application processing, and added flexibility in meeting the managerial ability eligibility requirement. Comments are welcome and need to be submitted by July 24, 2012. The proposed rule may be found at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/federalNotices?area=home&subject=lare&topic=frd-pi>.

2012 Operating Loans

Maine farmers and FSA employees have been busy this year as indicated by the large demand for Operating Loans. As of April 30, we had more than doubled our loan volume over the entire 2011 Fiscal Year. We appreciate the opportunity to assist our producers with their credit needs and anticipate that operating funds will be available for most of the remainder of the year. So if you have not yet filed your application, there is still time. Please contact your local FSA County Office for information.

Loans for the Socially Disadvantaged

FSA has a number of loan programs available to assist applicants to begin or continue in agriculture production. Loans are available for operating or help purchase or improve farms or ranches

While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, the FSA has provided priority funding for socially disadvantaged applicants.

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 a group.

FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere.

Selected Interest Rates for June 2012

90-Day Treasury Bill	0.125
Farm Operating - Direct	1.50
Farm Ownership - Direct	3.625
Farm Ownership - Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.50
Emergency	3.75
Farm Storage Facility—7 Year	1.250
Farm Storage Facility—10 Year	1.875
Farm Storage Facility—12 Year	2.375
9 Month Commodity Loan	1.125

Summary of FLP Activity for FY 12

81	Direct Operating Loans	\$ 5,401,130
5	Guaranteed Operating Loans	\$ 542,266
5	Direct Farm Ownership	\$ 1,579,600
4	Guaranteed Farm Ownership	\$ 1,665,000
95	Total Loans	\$ 9,187,996

Crop Reporting

The annual requirement of reporting to the FSA office can be referred to as crop reporting, acreage reporting or crop certification. Filing an accurate and timely report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage, can prevent loss of benefits for a variety of Farm Service Agency programs. All cropland on the farm must be reported to receive benefits from the Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program, marketing assistance loans and Load Deficiency Payments.

The certification form FSA-578, Report of Acreage, must account for all cropland on a farm, whether idle or planted.

CRP & NAP Certification

Conservation Reserve Program acreage must be reported to receive annual rental payments. Crop acreage for Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) must be reported.

Prevented Planting

Prevented planting is to be reported no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date. Failure to report prevented planting acreage could result in loss of benefits for the SURE program or possibly other disaster assistance programs.

Failed Acreage

Reports of failed acreage must be filed before disposition of the crop and producers must be able to establish to the satisfaction of the county committee that the crop failed and was prevented from being replanted through the normal planting period because of natural disaster conditions.

FSA county offices are taking appointments for producers to signup and report acres. Contact your local county office as soon as possible to make an appointment.

Farm Storage Facility Loan Program

The Farm Storage Facility Loan Program (FSFLP) allows producers of eligible commodities to obtain low-interest financing to build or upgrade farm storage and handling facilities.

The new maximum principal amount of a loan through FSFL is \$500,000. Participants are now required to provide a down payment of 15 percent, with CCC providing a loan for the remaining 85 percent of the net cost of the eligible storage facility and permanent drying and handling equipment. New loan terms of 7, 10 or 12 years are available depending on the amount of the loan. Interest rates for each term rate may be different and are based on the rate which CCC borrows from the Treasury Department.

Payments are available in the form of a partial disbursement and the remaining final disbursement. The partial disbursement will be available after a portion of the construction has been completed. The final fund disbursement will be made when all construction is completed. The maximum amount of the partial disbursement will be 50 percent of the projected and approved total loan amount.

Applications for FSFL must be submitted to the FSA county office that maintains the farm's records. An FSFL must be approved before any site preparation or construction can begin.

For more information about FSFL please visit your county office or www.fsa.usda.gov.

Special Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations will be made, upon request, for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment, or hearing impairment to attend or participate in meetings or events sponsored by the Farm Service Agency. If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in one of our events, please call the FSA county office and we will be happy to make any needed arrangements.



Crop Reporting Dates

Barley, Corn Fresh Market Sweet Corn, Green Peas, Oats, Potatoes, Spring Wheat, and all other crops	July 15, 2012
Forage Seeding	August 15, 2012
Perennial Forage, Fall-Seeded Small Grains	December 15, 2012
Apples, Blueberries	January 15, 2013