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Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Tennessee FSA Newsletter

Tennessee Farm Service Agency **From the Desk of Dennis H. Beavers**

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Dennis H. Beavers

State Committee:
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Robert Collier
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I am very pleased to have been recently appointed by President Donald J. Trump to serve as Tennessee's Farm Service Agency's State Executive Director, and I want to send you greetings and tell you who I am.

I was born and raised on a beef cattle and hay farm in Athens, Tennessee, where my father and I continue to raise Angus feeder calves and hay. In my younger days, I was a member of the 4-H and a state FFA officer. I graduated from Hiwassee College and the University of Tennessee where I earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture Education. I enjoy farming, writing gospel songs, and spending family time with my wife Kristi and our three children, and I am now honored to be a part of the USDA team that delivers programs to Tennessee's agriculture producers.

I wish you all a very Happy Thanksgiving!

To find contact information for your local office go to www.fsa.usda.gov/tn

USDA Announces Enrollment Period for Safety Net Coverage in 2018

FSA announced that starting Nov. 1, 2017, farmers and ranchers with base acres in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) safety net program may enroll for the 2018 crop year. The enrollment period will end on Aug. 1, 2018.

Since shares and ownership of a farm can change year-to-year, producers must enroll by signing a contract each program year.

The producers on a farm that are not enrolled for the 2018 enrollment period will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs for the 2018 crop should crop prices or farm revenues fall below the historical price or revenue benchmarks established by the program. Producers who made their elections in previous years must still enroll during the 2018 enrollment period.

The ARC and PLC programs were authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill and offer a safety net to agricultural producers when there is a substantial drop in prices or revenues for covered commodities. Covered commodities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium grain rice (which includes short grain and sweet rice), safflower seed, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat. Upland cotton is no longer a covered commodity. For more details regarding these programs, go to www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.

For more information, producers are encouraged to visit their local FSA office. To find a local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

FSA Encourages Farmers and Ranchers to Vote in County Committee Elections

The 2017 Farm Service Agency County Committee Elections began on Nov. 6, when ballots were mailed to eligible voters. The deadline to return the ballots to local FSA offices is Dec. 4, 2017.

County committee members are an important component of the operations of FSA and provide a link between the agricultural community and USDA. Farmers and ranchers elected to county committees help deliver FSA programs at the local level, applying their knowledge and judgment to make decisions on commodity price support programs; conservation programs; incentive indemnity and disaster programs for some commodities; emergency programs and eligibility. FSA committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws.

To be an eligible voter, farmers and ranchers must participate or cooperate in an FSA program. A person who is not of legal voting age, but supervises and conducts the farming operations of an entire farm may also be eligible to vote.

Eligible voters who do not receive a ballot can obtain one from their local USDA Service Center. Dec. 4, 2017, is the last day for voters to submit ballots in person to local USDA Service Centers. Ballots returned by mail must also be postmarked no later than Dec. 4. Newly elected committee members will take office Jan. 1, 2018.

More information on county committees, such as the new 2017 fact sheet, can be found on the FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov/elections or at a local USDA Service Center.

Loans for Targeted Underserved Producers

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

While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, FSA has provided priority funding for members of targeted underserved applicants.

A targeted underserved 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, targeted underserved groups are women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

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

Beginning Farmer Loans

FSA assists beginning farmers to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:

- 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 percent of the county's average size farm.

Additional program information, loan applications, and other materials are available at your local USDA Service Center. You may also visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

NASS Measuring Row Crops Production

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) began contacting farmers this month for the annual Row Crops County Agricultural Production Survey, one of the agency's larger surveys that queries Tennessee farmers about their 2017 corn, soybeans, cotton, hay and tobacco crops.

Data are collected about acres planted, acres harvested, and production starting in late October through the end of December. The data collected from this survey are combined with data from the December Agricultural Survey to set the county estimates.

NASS's county estimates are used in conjunction with other USDA agencies' estimate calculations to set standards for insurance and risk protection programs many farmers rely on to protect their operations.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) relies on the county-level estimates for Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC), Price Loss Coverage (PLC), County Loan Rates, and its disaster program calculations. The Risk Management Agency (RMA) uses the data for administering the Area Risk Protection Insurance Plan, establishment of transitional yields, and determining when to make crop loss insurance payments. When drought and flooding impact crop production, or even in a year with good yields, these data are crucial to the agriculture industry.

NASS will contact Tennessee survey participants to gather information on their 2017 production. As an alternative to mailing the survey back and to help save both time and money, growers will have the option to respond to the survey securely online. Farmers may also receive a phone call from a NASS representative who will interview operators using the survey form.

NASS safeguards the privacy of all respondents and publishes only aggregate data, ensuring that no individual operation or producer can be identified.

Survey results will be published on corn and soybeans Feb. 22, 2018; hay April 19, 2018; tobacco April 26, 2018; and cotton May 10, 2018. Tennessee data are available online at https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Tennessee/. For more information, call Debra Kenerson at the NASS Tennessee Field Office at 615-891-0903 or toll-free at 1-800-626-0987, or the Eastern Mountain Regional Field Office at 1-800-928-5277.

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