



Your Farm Service Agency Online Monthly Newsletter Covering the Latest Topics

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County Committee Election Results

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) County Committee (COC) elections took place late last year; now, it is time to meet the new and renewing County Committee members. They are:

Guam County – Brian Leon Guerrero farms cucumber, watermelon and bananas in Southern Guam. Born and raised on the family’s farm, he has been farming on his own for 15 years. Guerrero is an advocate for agriculture, as evidenced by his statement, “We are living on an island and have been sustainable for over 3,500 years. It doesn’t make sense to buy off-island produce while we can grow locally.”

Commonwealth Islands of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) – Jose M. DelaCruz from the island of Tinian will serve his first term on the CNMI COC. Mr. DelaCruz is a Senior Policy Advisor to the Mayor of Tinian and the co-founder and president of the Tinian Cattlemen’s Association. He ran for the COC to inform other producers about the valuable support available through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), as agriculture is a big part of the culture and a healthy way of life for his community.

Hawaii County – Aileen Yeh is a rancher and commercial grower of native trees and plants for forestry, timber and medicinal use. Her diverse background ranges from research and development of pineapple, papaya, awa, anthuriums, eucalyptus and other biomass crops. This will be Ms. Yeh’s sixth term on the Hawaii COC. She noted, “I enjoy being able to help farmers and ranchers during both good and bad times

and to see producers and landowners make use of the programs available to them to improve their farms and ranches.”

Maui County – Brian Otani will begin serving his second term on the Maui COC. He raises a variety of vegetable crops on the upper slopes of Haleakala.

Honolulu County – Verna Eguires hails from the windward side of Oahu where she raises beef cattle and devotes much time as a volunteer with the Clover J’s 4-H Livestock Club in Kahuku.

Kauai County – Charlene A. Medeiros raises goats and has a penchant for projects that are a challenge, as she enjoys the work and the rewards of successful projects. Another thing that Ms. Medeiros appreciates is helping out her fellow ranchers and farmers; hence, she has served on the Kauai COC for over 12 years.

Elected county committee members serve a three-year term and are responsible for making decisions on Farm Service Agency (FSA) disaster, conservation, commodity, and price support programs, as well as other important federal farm program issues.

County committee members are a valuable asset because they are comprised of local producers who participate in FSA programs themselves and have a direct connection to farmers and ranchers in the community. All recently elected county committee members took office on January 1, 2015, joining the existing committee members.

For more information about county committees and the election process, please contact your local FSA Office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

Hawaii State & Pacific Basin Farm Service Agency Office	
300 Ala Moana Blvd, Rm 5-108 Honolulu, HI 96850 Ph: (808) 541-2600 Fax: (855)356-9493	Diane Ley State Executive Director Steve Bazzell Farm Program Loan Chief
Hawaii County Farm Service Agency Hilo Office	
154 Waiuanue Ave, Room 219 Hilo, HI 96720 Ph: (808)933-8381 x 1 Fax: (855)356-9492	Lester Ueda County Executive Director Miki Miyasato Farm Loan Manager
Honolulu County Farm Service Agency Office	
99-193 Aiea Heights Dr, Room 114 Aiea, HI 96701 Ph: (808)483-8600 x 2 Fax: (855)356-9490	Jason Shitanishi County Executive Director Melissa Rodriques Farm Loan Manager
Kauai County Farm Service Agency Office	
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Guam-CNMI Farm Service Agency Office	
770 East Sunset Blvd. Room 265 Barrigada, GU 96913 Ph: (671)472-7568 Fax: (855)356-9491 CNMI (670)234-0896	Thomas Camacho County Executive Director Fred San Nicolas II Farm Loan Assistant Manager
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Pago Plaza Building, Room 213 P. O. Box 3661 Pago Pago, AS 96799 Ph: (684)633-1031 x 2 Fax: (684)633-7614	Josie Malepeai Lealasila Agricultural Specialist Letisha Gaoā Farm Loan Technician
Office Hours: Monday—Friday from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm	
<p>Next County Committee Meeting Dates:</p> <p><u>Hawaii County</u> - April 10 at 8:30 am</p> <p><u>Honolulu County</u> - February 20 at 3:00 pm</p> <p><u>Kauai County</u> - January 21 at 8:30 am</p> <p><u>Maui County</u> - February 19 at 9:00 am</p> <p><u>Guam County</u> - April 8 at 9:00 am</p> <p><u>CNMI County</u> - April 8 at 9:00 am</p> <p>Contact the County Office to confirm meeting date and time, as budget constraints may limit the County Committee's ability to meet each month. A list of County Offices, contact numbers and addresses may be found at:</p> <p>http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/hi_cof_staff.pdf</p>	

Tree Assistance Program Deadline

Orchardists and nursery tree growers who experienced losses from natural disasters that occurred on or after October 1, 2011, can sign up for the Tree Assistance Program (TAP), which provides financial assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines damaged by natural disasters.

Eligible tree types include trees, bushes or vines that produce an annual crop for commercial purposes. Nursery trees include ornamental, fruit, nut and Christmas trees that are produced for commercial sale. Trees used for pulp or timber are ineligible.

To qualify for TAP, orchardists must suffer a qualifying tree, bush or vine loss in excess of 15 percent mortality from an eligible natural disaster. The eligible trees, bushes or vines must have been owned when the natural disaster occurred; however, eligible growers are not required to own the land on which the eligible trees, bushes and vines were planted.

For losses that occurred on or after October 1, 2011, through the end of the 2014 calendar year, the final date to submit an application and supporting documentation is the later of January 31, 2015 or 90 calendar days after the disaster event or the date the loss is apparent. For calendar year 2015 and subsequent losses, all applications and supporting documentation must be submitted the later of 90 calendar days after the disaster event or the date the loss is apparent.

If the TAP application is approved, the eligible trees, bushes and vines must be replaced within 12 months from the date the application is approved. The cumulative total quantity of acres planted to trees, bushes or vines, for which a producer can receive TAP payments, cannot exceed 500 acres annually.

Dairy Indemnity Payment Program

The 2014 Farm Bill authorized the extension of the Dairy Indemnity Payment Program (DIPP) through September 30, 2018 to provide payments to dairy producers and manufacturers of dairy products when they are directed to remove their raw milk or products from the market because of contamination.

Contact your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov for more about FSA programs and loans, including the Farm Storage Facility Loan Program.

Farm Bill Allows Early Termination for Certain Conservation Reserve Program Contracts

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds producers with acres under contract through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) that they can apply for early contract termination, as required by the 2014 Farm Bill. The deadline to request early CRP contract termination is January 30, 2015.

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contract must have been in effect for at least five years and additional eligibility conditions must be met to qualify. The 2014 Farm Bill identifies a list of 10 exceptions whereby land will not be eligible for the early termination provisions. For a complete list of these exceptions, please view the [CRP fact sheet](#).

Once a CRP contract termination request is approved by the FSA County Committee, the decision may not be reversed and the terminated contract will not be reinstated. Once the land is no longer considered under the CRP contract all participants must meet Highly Erodible Lands and Wetlands Conservation and other conservation compliance provisions for all associated lands.

For more information or to verify eligibility for early termination for existing CRP contracts, please contact your local FSA office.

Loan Deficiency Payments for Unshorn Lamb Pelts

Eligible producers have until January 31, 2015, to apply for Loan Deficiency Payments for unshorn pelts produced during the 2014 crop year.

Eligible producers must have beneficial interest in the pelts, owned the lamb for at least 30 calendar days before the date of slaughter and sell the unshorn lamb for immediate slaughter. Producers must also comply with wetland conservation and highly erodible land conservation provisions on all lands they operate or have interest in.

To qualify for payment, pelts must have been produced by an eligible producer from live unshorn lambs of domestic origin in the United States.

Contact your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov for more about FSA programs and loans, including the Farm Storage Facility Loan Program.

Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Offered Support

New and beginning farmers and ranchers can learn about programs and resources available through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) by making an appointment to visit with their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office or at the new USDA website for [new farmers](#). Both options offer a centralized, one-stop resource where beginning farmers and ranchers can explore the variety of USDA initiatives designed to help them succeed.

The website offers in depth information for new farmers and ranchers including: how to increase access to land and capital; build new market opportunities; participate in conservation opportunities; select and use the right risk management tools; and access USDA education and technical support programs. By visiting the website producers can also read instructive case studies about beginning farmers who have successfully utilized USDA resources to start or expand their business' operations.

New benefits for new and beginning farmers and ranchers include:

Waiver of service fees to enroll in the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP). This risk management program provides tools for farmers who grow crops for which there is no crop insurance product.

Increased payment rates to beginning farmers and ranchers under Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP). Under this provision, beginning farmers can claim up 90 percent of losses, which is a 50 percent increase over previously available payment amounts.

Additional information about USDA programs in support of beginning farmers and ranchers is available [here](#).

Interest Rates for January 2015	
Farm Operating Loans — Direct	2.625 %
MicroLoans	2.625 %
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct	4.00 %
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.50 %
Emergency Loans	3.625 %

Microloan Program Extended to the Republic of the Marshall Islands

On December 19, 2014, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) entered into an agreement with the Republic of the Marshall Islands to extend the microloan program to producers of this island nation.

“Access to low-interest microloans will offer producers of Majuro Atoll in the Marshall Islands new opportunities to grow their businesses to meet their family’s financial needs, increase local food self-sufficiency and support the expansion of the local economy,” said Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Executive Director Diane Ley.



From (L) to (R): Hiroshi Yamamura, Marshall Islands Minister of Public Works and Acting Minister for Resources and Development; Anel Philimon, Director, SBDC; Carl Hacker, President, College of the Marshall Islands; Diane Ley, State Executive Director, USDA, FSA.

Photo by LOIS SHELDON

The microloan program provides producers with access to up to \$50,000 in credit using a simplified application process, with up to seven years to repay. The loans are designed to bolster the progress of producers in their initial operational years by providing early financial resources to increase equity and assist with graduating to commercial credit and expanding operations. Microloans can be used for initial start-up and annual expenses such as seed, fertilizer, utilities and land rents; marketing and distribution expenses; or purchase of livestock and equipment.

An important component of this agreement is the partnerships with local government and organizations that will serve as a direct link between Marshallese farmers and FSA. Partners include the United States Small Business Development Center (SBDC), a non-profit organization that will guide producers in the loan application process. Other partners include the College

of the Marshall Islands, which will provide training and educational workshops to producers and the Marshall Islands Ministry of Resources and Development, which will coordinate the partners and offer technical support to Majuro producers.

The availability of the microloan program in Majuro supports the objectives defined in the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders to increase access to federal programs that improve health, and environmental quality; access to fresh produce, meats; and agricultural production practices. A former Trust Territory of the Pacific, the Republic of the Marshall Islands became an independent nation in the 1980s, with the United States government providing certain federal programs under the treaty terms of the Compact of Free Association, as amended.

For more information on [USDA microloans](#) or to learn how USDA is helping [beginning farmers](#) click on the hyperlinks.

Livestock Disaster Assistance Deadline Nears

Livestock disaster programs were authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill as permanent programs and retroactive authority was afforded to cover losses that occurred on or after October 1, 2011.

Programs include:

Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) provides compensation to eligible livestock producers that have suffered grazing losses due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land or fire on federally managed land. Eligible producers must physically be located in a county affected by a qualifying drought during the normal grazing period for the county. Producers who suffered eligible grazing losses should submit a completed CCC-853 and supporting documentation to their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office by January 30, 2015.

Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides compensation to eligible livestock producers that have suffered livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law. Producers who suffered livestock deaths should submit a notice of loss and an application for payment to their local FSA office by January 30, 2015.

USDA & FSA Notices

If your business currently participates in programs or receives benefits from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) or may have an interest or opportunity to do so in the future, be advised of the following policies, regulations and requirements:

FSA Signature Policy

Using the correct signature when doing business with Farm Service Agency (FSA) can save time and prevent a delay in program benefits. The following are FSA signature guidelines:

- Spouses may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and Commodity Credit Corporation programs in which either has an interest, unless written notification denying a spouse this authority has been provided to the county office
- Spouses shall not sign on behalf of each other as an authorized signatory for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations, or other similar entities

For additional clarification on proper signatures contact your local FSA office.

Foreign Buyers Notification

The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) requires all foreign owners of United States (U.S.) agricultural land to report their holdings to the Secretary of Agriculture. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers this program.

All individuals who are not U.S. citizens, and have purchased or sold agricultural land in the county are required to report the transaction to FSA with 90 days of the closing. Failure to submit the AFIDA form (FSA-153) could result in civil penalties of up to 25 percent 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.

Farming Operation Changes

Producers who have bought or sold land, or added or dropped rented land from their operation must report those changes to the Farm Service Agency (FSA) office as soon as possible. A copy of the deed or recorded land contract for purchase property is needed to maintain accurate records with FSA. Failure to do so can lead to possible program ineligibility and penalties. While making record updates, be sure to update signature authorizations.

Breaking New Ground

Agricultural producers are reminded to consult with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) before breaking new ground for production as doing so without prior authorization may put a producer's federal farm program benefits in jeopardy. This is especially true for land that must meet Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions.

Producers with HEL determined soils must apply tillage, crop residue and rotation requirements as specified in their conservation plan.

Producers should notify FSA prior to conducting land clearing or drainage projects to ensure compliance. If you intend to clear any trees to create new cropland, these areas will need to be reviewed to ensure any work will not risk your eligibility for benefits.

Landowners and operators can complete form AD-1026 Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation Certification to determine whether a referral to NRCS is necessary.

Bank Account Changes

Current policy mandates that Farm Service Agency (FSA) payments be electronically transferred into a bank account. In order for timely payments to be made, producers need to notify the FSA county office when an account has been changed or if another financial institution purchases the bank where payments are sent. Payments can be delayed if the FSA office is not aware of updates to bank accounts and routing numbers.

Appeal Process

After a Farm Service Agency official makes a negative decision on a request for services or application, the producer will be sent a letter informing him/her of the decision and options that can be pursued.

Generally, program participants have three choices - an informal review with the original agency decision-maker; an opportunity for mediation; or an appeal to the next level of authority within the agency.

USDA & FSA Notices continued...

Special Accommodations

Special accommodations will be made upon request for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment or hearing impairment. If accommodations are required, individuals should contact the Farm Service Agency office staff directly or by phone.

Power of Attorney

For those who find it difficult to visit the county office because of work schedules, distance, health, or other situations, Farm Service Agency (FSA) has a power of attorney form available that allows producers to designate another person to conduct business at the office. If interested, contact your FSA office for more information.

Controlled Substance

Any person convicted under federal or state law of a controlled substance violation could be ineligible for United States Department of Agriculture payments or benefits. Violations include planting, harvesting or growing a prohibited plant. Prohibited plants include marijuana, opium, poppies and other drug producing plants.

Dates to Remember

January 30, 2015	Deadline to apply for Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP)
January 30, 2015	Deadline to apply for the Livestock Indemnity Program
January 31, 2015	Deadline to apply for the Tree Assistance Program
January 31, 2015	Deadline to request contract termination for the Conservation Reserve Program
January 31, 2015	Unshorn Lamb Loan Deficiency Payments deadline for crop year 2014

Filing for Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) Losses

The CCC-576, Notice of Loss, is used to report failed acreage and prevented planting and may be completed by any producer with an interest in the crop. Timely filing a Notice of Loss is required for all crops including grasses. For losses on crops covered by the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) and crop insurance, you must file a CCC-576, Notice of Loss, in the FSA County Office within 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent.

If filing for prevented planting, an acreage report and CCC-576 must be filed within 15 calendar days of the final planting date for the crop.

Farm Storage Facility Loan Program Enhanced

The Farm Storage and Facility Loan program provides low-interest financing to producers including small and mid-sized operations and specialty fruit and vegetable growers. Capital can be utilized for a variety of supplies including sorting bins, wash stations and other food safety-related equipment. A new and more flexible alternative is provided for determining storage needs for fruit and vegetable producers, and waivers are available on a case-by-case basis for disaster assistance or insurance coverage if available products are not relevant or feasible for a particular producer.

Farm Storage Facility Loan security requirements have been eased. Now loans up to \$50,000 can be secured by only a promissory note/security agreement and some loans between \$50,000 and \$100,000 will no longer require additional security.

The low-interest capital can be used to build or upgrade permanent facilities to store commodities. Eligible commodities include fruits, vegetables, honey, grains, oilseeds, peanuts, pulse crops, hay and renewable biomass commodities. Qualified facilities include cold storage facilities for fruits and vegetables, grain bins and hay barns.

Contact your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov for more about FSA programs and loans, including the Farm Storage Facility Loan Program.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).