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FSA makes move toward paperless office

USDA's Farm Service Agency, in a step toward compliance with Government Paperwork Elimination Act requirements, has chosen ECI's Web Equity Manager software to replace the legacy Farm and Home Plan software it currently uses. ECI is the leading agricultural credit analysis software company. The regulation requires the government be able to accept business transactions and record keeping data from program participants electronically by October 2003.

One of FSA's key goals for Web Equity Manager is to give producers tools to complete their farm business plans on the Web and submit them electronically to their service center. This will give service center employees enhanced capabilities for helping producers complete their business plans, ECI says.

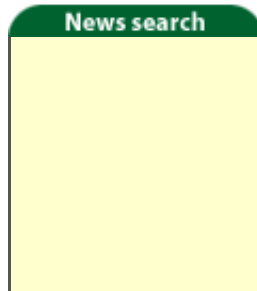
"We knew that we had to start running our financing programs like the rest of the financial analysis industry including standardizing our use of things like Farm Financial Standards Ratios, accrual analysis and the like," says Steve Rubin, FSA's head of the Web-based FHP initiative. "Web Equity Manager is not simply a replacement for the existing FHP, but a system that USDA and other government agencies can expand upon into the future," he said in a release today.

FHP and Guaranteed Loan programs will be the beginning for the Web Equity Manager standardized analysis and information management platform, he says.

"The Web-based forms and processes in Web Equity Manager will satisfy our long-term goals for sharing automated tools such as government loan programs with participants. This is a far-reaching initiative that goes way beyond the exchange of information between the producer, lenders and FSA," he says.

"Long-term it could involve other entities like universities, agricultural consultants, accountants, and industry suppliers that have a direct affect on the successful processing of FSA program participant information." **09/30/2003 01:42 p.m.CDT**

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