



USDA Farm Service Agency 2016 County Committee Election

OVERVIEW

Every eligible agricultural producer should participate in Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees elections -- whether you are a beginning or longtime producer, historically disadvantaged producer, or whether you have a large or small operation -- because FSA county committees are your link with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Farmers and ranchers who are elected to serve on FSA county committees apply their judgment and knowledge to help with the decisions necessary to administer FSA programs in their counties, ensuring the needs of local producers are met. FSA county committees operate within official federal regulations and provide local input on:

- Income safety-net loans and payments, including setting county average yields for commodities;
- Conservation programs;
- Incentive, indemnity and disaster payments for some commodities;
- Emergency programs; and
- Payment eligibility.

ELECTION PERIOD

June 15, 2016 – The nomination period begins. Request nomination forms from the local FSA county office or obtain online at www.fsa.usda.gov/elections.

Aug. 1, 2016 – Last day to file nomination forms at the local FSA county office.

Nov. 7, 2016 – Ballots mailed to eligible voters.

Dec. 5, 2016 – Last day to return voted ballots to the FSA county office.

Jan. 1, 2017 – Newly elected county committee members take office.

WHO CAN VOTE

Agricultural producers of legal voting age may be eligible to vote if they participate or cooperate in any FSA program. A person who is not of legal voting

age, but supervises and conducts the operations of an entire farm also may be eligible to vote. Members of American Indian tribes holding agricultural land are eligible to vote if voting requirements are met. More information about voting eligibility requirements can be found in the FSA fact sheet titled “FSA County Committee Election - Eligibility to Vote and Hold Office as a County Committee Member” located at www.fsa.usda.gov/news-room/county-committee-elections/index. Producers may contact their local FSA county office for more information. To find your local FSA county office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

NOMINATIONS

Agricultural producers who participate or cooperate in an FSA program may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee. Individuals may nominate themselves or others as a candidate. In addition, organizations representing underserved (minority and women) farmers or ranchers may nominate candidates.

To become a nominee, eligible individuals must sign nomination form FSA-669A. The form includes a statement that the nominee agrees to serve if elected. Nomination forms are filed in the FSA office that administers a producer’s farm records and is available at the FSA county office or online at www.fsa.usda.gov/elections.

Nomination forms for the 2016 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA county office by Aug. 1, 2016.

DON'T MISS OUT ON VOTING

Ballots will be mailed to voters by Nov. 7, 2016, and must be returned to the FSA county office or postmarked by Dec. 5, 2016. Eligible voters must contact their local FSA county office before the final date if they did not receive a ballot.

UNIFORM GUIDELINES

USDA issued uniform guidelines for county committee elections to help ensure that FSA county committees fairly represent the agricultural producers

of a county or multi-county jurisdiction, especially underserved (minority and women) producers. Targeted underserved producers are African-Americans, American Indians or Alaska Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders. In addition to minority and women producers, USDA strongly encourages beginning farmers to actively seek a position on a county committee. The guidelines govern the FSA county committee election process and are designed to increase participation of underserved (minorities and women).

The following are just some of the specifics of the guidelines:

- If no valid nominations are filed, the Secretary of Agriculture may nominate up to two individuals to be placed on the ballot.
- FSA county committees annually review local administrative area boundaries to ensure the fair representation of minority and women producers in their county or multi-county jurisdictions.
- FSA county offices locate and recruit eligible candidates identified as minority and women farmers and ranchers as potential nominees for the FSA county committee elections through outreach and publicity, including the development of partnerships with community-based organizations.

The guidelines are located at FSA County Committee Elections page at www.fsa.usda.gov/elections.

APPOINTED VOTING MEMBERS

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 provided Secretary Vilsack with authority to appoint targeted underserved committee members with voting privileges to serve on FSA county committees in county or multi-county jurisdictions that lack fair representation from those groups. The Secretarial appointees do not replace elected members, but join them as voting members on the committee. Individuals serving as non-voting minority advisors are encouraged to submit a nomination form. These forms are also accepted from community-based organizations representing targeted underserved producers. Targeted underserved voting members are appointed by the Secretary from the nominations received.

ROLE OF ADVISORS

In addition to elected or appointed members, FSA county committees may also include advisors. Advisors are appointed to county committees in counties or multi-county jurisdictions that have significant numbers of underserved (minority or women) producers, but lack such members on FSA county committees. Advisors play an important role by providing diverse viewpoints and by representing the interests of underserved (minorities and women) in decisions made by county committees. FSA state committees officially appoint advisors who are recommended by county committees or community-based organizations.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

This fact sheet is for informational purposes only; other restrictions may apply. For program specifics or additional information about FSA county committees, visit a local FSA county office or the FSA county committee website at www.fsa.usda.gov/elections.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- 1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- 2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- 3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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