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Washington FSA Newsletter

Washington Farm Service Agency

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County Committee Members Bring Local Knowledge to FSA

Agency Seeks Nominees for 2016 Elections

You have a chance to influence federal farm programs with your local knowledge. FSA is seeking nominations for farmers and ranchers willing to represent your peers on the agency's county committees. All county FSA offices will accept nominations through **August 1, 2016** for this fall's elections.

Farmers and ranchers on FSA county committees make decisions which impact program payments. They can settle appeals of agency decisions. Also, they are responsible for hiring FSA managers at the county level.

FSA encourages all interested agricultural producers, including women and minority growers, to seek nomination. Eligible candidates must participate or cooperate in any Farm Service Agency program and be of legal voting age. Even if you are not currently participating in FSA programs, you are considered eligible to vote if you have farm records on file with the agency.

Each county committee draws its members from local administrative areas. Nominated by local farmers and ranchers, candidates must live in the

county's local administrative area they will represent and must be eligible to vote in the county election. Members serve on staggered three-year terms so that one-third of the seats are up for re-election each year. If you would like to nominate a candidate, or yourself, contact your local [FSA office](#) or check the [LAA map](#) on the FSA website www.fsa.usda.gov/wa to find out which local administrative areas are up for election.

Elected county committee members receive an hourly wage for their attendance and representation at county committee meetings.

Elections will take place in the fall and newly elected committee members begin their terms in January 2017. FSA will send ballots to all eligible voters. Additional information and nomination forms may be requested from any [FSA office](#). Nomination forms may also be obtained [online](#).

USDA Unveils New Improvement to Streamline Crop Reporting

Update Lets Farmers and Ranchers Report Common Acreage Information Once

Farmers and ranchers filing crop acreage reports with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and participating insurance providers approved by the Risk Management Agency (RMA) now can provide the common information from your acreage reports at one office and the information will be electronically shared with the other location.

This new process is part of the USDA Acreage Crop Reporting Streamlining Initiative (ACRSI). This interagency collaboration also includes participating private crop insurance agents and insurance companies, all working to streamline the information collected from farmers and ranchers who participate in USDA programs.

Once files are at one location, data that's important to both FSA and RMA will be securely and electronically shared with the other location avoiding redundant and duplicative reporting, as well as saving you time.

Since 2009, USDA has been working to streamline the crop reporting process for agricultural producers, who have expressed concerns with providing the same basic common information for multiple locations. In 2013, USDA consolidated the deadlines to 15 dates for submitting these reports, down from the previous 54 dates at RMA and 17 dates for FSA. USDA representatives

believe farmers and ranchers will experience a notable improvement.

More than 93 percent of all annual reported acres to FSA and RMA now are eligible for the common data reporting, and USDA is exploring adding more crops. Producers must still visit both locations to validate and sign acreage reports, complete maps or provide program specific information. The common data from the first-filed acreage report will now be available to pre-populate and accelerate completion of the second report. Plans are underway at USDA to continue building upon the framework with additional efficiencies at a future date.

Farmers and ranchers are also reminded that you can now access your FSA farm information from the convenience of your home computer. You can see field boundaries, images of the farm, conservation status, operator and owner information and much more.

The new customer self-service portal, known as FSAFarm+, gives farmers and ranchers online access to securely view, print or export your personal farm data. To enroll in the online service, you are encouraged to contact your local [FSA office](#) for details.

Looking to Buy a Farm? Always Dreamed of Owning One?

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has a number of tools that can help farmers and ranchers purchase and/or improve farm real estate. FSA can provide direct funding, guarantee a percentage of a commercial lender's loan, or in some cases FSA will join another lender in financing a farm purchase.

Direct Farm Ownership Loans are those in which the monies are derived directly from FSA. These loans are processed by the local office and serviced by the local loan official. Experience is a key factor in meeting eligibility requirements for this program. Applicants must have participated in the business operations of a farm for a least 3 years out of the 10 years prior to the date the application is submitted. FSA may consider post-secondary education, significant business experience, or management/leadership in military service as a substitute for one of three years needed to qualify the applicant.

FSA's evaluation of qualifying experience is completed on a case-by-case basis. The

complexity of the proposed operation is critical as loan officials must determine there is adequate experience to ensure a reasonable prospect of success. Some aspiring farmers may not have this experience when you first speak to the FSA loan officials. If you are unable to secure the needed financing through a commercial lender, it is important to develop a path to get yourself eligible for a Farm Ownership loan.

One such way is to start with an FSA Microloan operating loan. This program can provide up to \$50,000 to finance items such as farm rent, seed and labor on a short-term basis or perhaps purchase livestock and equipment for a term up to seven years. This provides a great opportunity to gain the needed experience, develop a proven production and sales history, and even more importantly can help a beginning farmer identify the characteristics in your "dream" farm that will be best suited for success. The FSA loan staff is committed to helping you meet your agricultural goals. Even if you're not quite ready and in the planning and research phase, please do not hesitate to meet with us to help you develop a path to get you where you want to be.

Outreach Funding Available for FSA Educational Partners

FSA is accepting proposals for cooperative agreements to educate historically underserved farmers and other producers about FSA programs, such as those that provide financial, disaster or technical support.

Applications are due no later than July 11, 2016. This is the second consideration period for proposals. Projects not selected during the first evaluation period will be reconsidered during the second period. Additional information on the funding solicitation and the related FSA programs can be found at <http://www.grants.gov/> using reference number USDA-FSA-CA-2016-001. For nonprofits and public institutions of higher education that are considering participation, a recording of the online informational session held with stakeholders is posted on the web at www.fsa.usda.gov/outreach.

USDA Extends Deadline for Recording Farm Structure

Gives Non-Family Farming Operations More Time to Restructure in Response to 'Actively Engaged' Farm Management Rule

USDA announced a one-time, 30-day extension to the June 1 deadline for recording farm organization structures related to "actively engaged in farming" determinations. This date is used to determine the level of interest an individual holds in a legal entity for the applicable program year. Farming operations will now have until July 1, 2016 to complete your restructuring or finalize any operational change. USDA issued the extension in response to farmers and ranchers who requested more time to comply, and to assure that everyone has enough time to provide their information under the new rules.

The 2014 Farm Bill provided the Secretary with the direction and authority to amend the "actively

engaged in farming" rules related to management. The final rule established limits on the number of individuals who can qualify as actively engaged using only management. Only one payment limit for management is allowed under the rule, with the ability to request up to two additional qualifying managers operations for large and complex operations.

The rule does not apply to farming operations comprised entirely of family members. The rule also does not change the existing regulations related to contributions of land, capital, equipment or labor, or the existing regulations related to landowners with a risk in the crop or to spouses. Producers that planted fall crops have until the 2017 crop year to comply with the new rules. The payment limit associated with Farm Service Agency farm payments is generally limited annually to \$125,000 per individual or entity.

Important Dates and Deadlines

April 1 - July 1 - The primary nesting season for Washington. During this time period, prior approval of the County Committee is required to spot treat weeds by mowing, burning, or spraying after the stand is established.

June 1, 2016 - Deadline to certify conservation compliance to remain eligible for crop insurance subsidy.

July 1, 2016 - Deadline for recording farm organizational structure.

July 11, 2016 - Deadline to submit outreach funding application.

July 15, 2016 - Crop acreage reporting deadline for spring-seeded crops and CRP.

August 1, 2016 - Deadline to submit nominations for county committee elections.

For previous issues of the FSA Washington newsletter and a list of annual program **reminders**, check the [newsletter page](#) on the FSA Washington website.

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