



## Winter 2015



### Cortland/Tompkins FSA Office

1 North Main Street  
Cortland, NY 13045

Phone: (607)753-0851  
Fax: (855)558-3724  
[www.fsa.usda.gov/NY](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/NY)

### Hours

Monday - Friday  
8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

### County Executive Director

Rob Gallinger

### Farm Loan Manager

Sharon Horsford

### Farm Loan Officers

Noreen Atkins  
Roger Thomas

### Staff

Tina Whiteman  
Jennifer Doty  
Shawna Schell  
Joanne Hoellerer

### Cortland/Tompkins County Committee,

Steve Mudge, Chair  
Ray Van deBogart,  
Vice Chair  
Jeffrey Cook  
Paul Fouts  
Carol Weddle

### Office Schedule

The standard operating hours for the Cortland/Tompkins County Farm Service Agency office is 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. The office will be closed on all Federal holidays.

### COC Election Results

Congratulations to Carol Weddle and Jeffrey Cook!

FSA appreciates all of the voters for taking the time to complete the election ballot. The County Committee system works only because of your participation.



### County Committee News

The Cortland-Tompkins County Committee held their annual Organizational Meeting on Wednesday, January 7<sup>th</sup>. Steve Mudge was elected chairperson and Ray Van deBogart was elected Vice-Chairperson.

### County Committee Meetings

The five-member Cortland-Tompkins County Farm Service Agency Committee meets on an as-needed basis. The Committee has established the Cortland/Tompkins County FSA office as its meeting place. The date is subject to change based on the amount of material to cover as well as office scheduling. Interested producers should call the FSA office at the beginning of the month to verify the next meeting date.



### County Committee members are:

Carol Weddle, representing LAA 1 – Homer, Scott, Preble, Truxton, Cuyler  
Steven Mudge, representing LAA 2 – Marathon, Cincinnatus, Willet, Freetown, Taylor, Solon  
Paul Fouts, representing LAA 3 – Cortlandville, Virgil, Harford, Lapeer  
Jeffrey Cook, representing LAA 4 – Lansing, Groton, Dryden, Caroline  
Ray Van deBogart, representing LAA 5 – Ulysses, Enfield, Ithaca, Newfield, Danby

### Coverage Selection for New 2014 Farm Bill Safety Net (former DCP)

Farm owners and producers are reminded that the opportunity to choose between the new 2014 Farm Bill established programs, Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC), began Nov. 17, 2014, and continues through March 31, 2015. The new programs, designed to help producers better manage risk, usher in one of the most significant reforms to U.S. farm programs in decades.

USDA helped create online tools to assist in the decision process, allowing farm owners and producers to enter information about their operation and see projections that show what ARC and/or PLC will mean for them under possible future scenarios. Farm owners and producers can access the online resources, available at [www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc), from the convenience of their home computer or mobile device at any time.

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 rice), safflower seed, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat. Upland cotton is no longer a covered commodity.

Dates associated with ARC and PLC that farm owners and producers need to know:

- **Now through Feb. 27, 2015:** Farm owners may visit their local Farm Service Agency office to update yield history and/or reallocate base acres. ***This will require an owner's signature, please plan ahead.***
- Now through March 31, 2015: Producers make a one-time election between ARC and PLC for the 2014 through 2018 crop years.
- Mid-April 2015 through June 1, 2015: Producers sign contracts for 2014 and 2015 crop years.
- October 2015: Payments issued for 2014 crop year, if needed.



To learn more about which safety net options are most appropriate for specific farming operations, farmers can use new Web tools at [www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc), which can be accessed from the convenience of a home computer or a mobile device at any time.

### 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 county FSA office staff directly or by phone

2014 Commodity Loan Rate	
Wheat – Hard Red Spring	\$3.78
Wheat – Soft Red Winter	\$2.61
Wheat – Soft White Winter	\$2.68
Corn	\$2.10
Barley	\$1.72
Oats	\$1.35
Soybeans	\$4.98
Ungraded Wool	\$0.40
Mohair	\$4.20
Sunflowers (Cortland/Tompkins)	\$7.34/\$7.42
Honey	\$0.69



### 2014 MAL and LDP Requests

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) is accepting requests for marketing assistance loans (MALs) and loan deficiency payments (LDPs) for eligible 2014 commodities.

MALs and LDPs for the 2014 crop year become available to eligible producers beginning with harvest/shearing season and extending through a specific commodity's final loan availability date.

MALs and LDPs provide financing and marketing assistance for wheat, feed grains, soybeans, and other oilseeds, pulse crops, rice, peanuts, cotton, wool, mohair and honey. MALs provide producers interim financing after harvest to help them meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows. A producer who is eligible to obtain a loan, but agrees to forgo the loan, may obtain an LDP if such a payment is available.

Before MAL repayments and LDP disbursements can be made, producers must meet the requirements of actively engaged in farming, cash rent tenant and member contribution. Additionally, form CCC-902 and CCC-901 must be submitted for the 2014 crop year, if applicable, with a county committee determination and updated subsidiary files.

To be considered eligible for an LDP, producers must have form CCC-633EZ, Page 1 on file at their local FSA Office before losing beneficial interest in the crop. Pages 2, 3 or 4 of the form must be submitted when payment is requested.

Please contact your local FSA office for additional eligibility requirements.

The 2014 Farm Bill also establishes payment limitations per individual or entity not to exceed \$125,000 annually on certain commodities for the following program benefits: price loss coverage payments, agriculture risk coverage payments, marketing loan gains (MLGs) and LDPs. These payment limitations do not apply to MAL loan disbursements.

Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) provisions were modified by the 2014 Farm Bill, which states that a producer whose total applicable three-year average AGI exceeds \$900,000 is not eligible to receive an MLG or LDP.

National and county loans rates for 2014 crops are posted on the FSA website at: [www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport).

### Unauthorized Disposition of Grain

If loan grain has been disposed of through feeding, selling or any other form of disposal without prior written authorization from the county office staff, it is considered unauthorized disposition. The financial penalties for unauthorized dispositions are severe and a producer's name will be placed on a loan violation list for a two-year period. Always call before you haul any grain under loan.

Dates to Remember	
Feb 16	Office Closed – Presidents Day
Feb 27	Deadline for Base Redistribution/Yield Updates
Mar 31	Deadlines for ARCPLC Elections
May 15	Acreage Reporting Deadline – Spring Forage Seeding
May 25	Office Closed – Memorial Day
June 1	Deadline 2014 Commodity Loans – Corn, Soybean
June 1	Deadline to enroll 2014 & 2015 ARCPLC contracts
July 3	Office Closed – Independence Day (Observed)
July 15	Acreage Reporting Deadline – all other crops
Aug 15	Acreage Reporting Deadline – Cabbage
Sept 7	Office Closed – Labor Day

### 2015 Acreage Reporting Dates

In order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements, all producers are encouraged to visit their local County FSA office to file an accurate crop certification report by the applicable deadline.

*May 15, 2015*- Spring Forage Seeding, Onions

*July 15, 2015* - Dry Beans, CRP/CREP and all other crops

*August 15, 2015* - Cabbage, Fresh Market Beans, Processing Beans

The following exceptions apply to the above acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the above acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the above acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.
- If a perennial forage crop is reported with the intended use of "cover only," "green manure," "left standing," or "seed," then the acreage must be reported by July 15th.

\*\*Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP covered crops is the earlier of the dates listed above or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

For questions regarding crop certification and crop loss reports, please contact the office.

### Measurement Service

Farmers who would like a guarantee on their crop plantings and land use acreages can make it official by using the FSA measurement service. Producers must file a request with the county office staff and pay the cost of a field visit to have stake and referencing done on the farm. Measurement service is available using digital imagery and where an on-site visit is not required are charged at a reduced rate.

Incorrect acreage self-certification can result in reduced program payments, penalty, or loss of eligibility. Producers can request ortho-imagery and CLU covering their land (commonly referred to as a clip) at no charge.

### Maintaining the Quality of Loaned Grain

Bins are ideally designed to hold a level volume of grain. When bins are overfilled and grain is heaped up, airflow is hindered and the chance of spoilage increases.

Producers who take out marketing assistance loans and use the farm-stored grain as collateral should remember that they are responsible for maintaining the quality of the grain through the term of the loan.



## Conservation Compliance – Don't Lose your Benefits!

Have you, will you, or are you thinking about doing any of the following activities on any of the land you use?

- Purchased/renting new land
- Land clearing
- Excavation
- Stump removal
- Land leveling
- Filling an area
- Dredging an area
- Creating new fields
- Create new drainage system
- Modify an existing drainage system
- Improve an existing drainage system
- Maintain an existing drainage system
- Planting an agricultural commodity on land for which an Highly Erodible or Wetland determination has not been completed



If you answered yes to any of these questions and want to remain eligible for your USDA program payments, you MUST stop in the office to file form AD-1026. Failure to maintain conservation compliance puts your past, present, and future USDA program payments at risk.

## 2014 Farm Bill Conservation Compliance Changes

The 2014 Farm Bill implements a change that requires farmers to have a Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation Certification (AD-1026) on file.

For farmers to be eligible for premium support on their federal crop insurance, a completed and signed AD-1026 certification form must be on file with the FSA. The Risk Management Agency (RMA), through the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC), manages the federal crop insurance program that provides the modern farm safety net for American farmers and ranchers.

Since enactment of the 1985 Farm Bill, eligibility for most commodity, disaster, and conservation programs has been linked to compliance with the highly erodible land conservation and wetland conservation provisions. The 2014 Farm Bill continues the requirement that producers adhere to conservation compliance guidelines to be eligible for most programs administered by FSA and NRCS. This includes most financial assistance such as the new price and revenue protection programs, the Conservation Reserve Program, the Livestock Disaster Assistance programs and Marketing Assistance Loans and most programs implemented by FSA. It also includes the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the Conservation Stewardship Program, and other conservation programs implemented by NRCS.

Many FSA and Natural Resource Conservation (NRCS) programs already have implemented this requirement and therefore most producers should already have an AD-1026 from on file for their associated lands. If however an AD-1026 form has not been filed or is incomplete then farmers are reminded of the deadline of June 1, 2015.

When a farmer completes and submits the AD-1026 certification form, FSA and NRCS staff will review the associated farm records and outline any additional actions that may be required to meet the required compliance with the conservation compliance provisions. FSA recently released a revised form AD-1026, which is available at USDA Service Centers and online at: [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov). USDA will publish a rule later this year that will provide details outlining the connection of conservation compliance with crop insurance premium support. Producers can also contact their local USDA Service Center for information. A listing of service center locations is available at

[www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/contact/local/](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/contact/local/)

## Sodbuster, Swampbuster



FSA programs require compliance with sodbuster and swampbuster provisions. These provisions require producers to follow an approved conservation system on all highly erodible land planted to an annual crop as determined by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Be sure to have determinations made on any new land you plan to plant to annual crops. If you plan to plant a different crop on your current cropland, check with NRCS to assure the new crop will qualify under your conservation system. Swampbuster provisions state that converting a wetland to make possible the planting of a crop will result in the loss of all USDA benefits.

## Selling Land

If you're planning to sell farmland, there may be some program consequences you should be aware of. For example, if you're planning to sell land that's enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program, the buyer must agree to continue the enrollment. If the buyer doesn't want to continue the CRP contract, you might have to refund all of the payments you've received to date. Reviewing program implications with your local FSA staff before completing a sale of farmland is always a prudent precaution.

## Farm Storage Facility Loan Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the expansion of the Farm Storage and Facility Loan program, which provides low-interest financing to producers. The enhanced program includes 22 new categories of eligible equipment for fruit and vegetable producers.

Producers with small and mid-sized operations, and specialty crop fruit and vegetable growers, now have access to needed capital for a variety of supplies including sorting bins, wash stations and other food safety-related equipment. A new more flexible alternative is also 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.

Additionally, Farm Storage and Facility Loans security requirements have been eased for loans between \$50,000 and \$100,000. Previously, all loans in excess of \$50,000 and any loan with little resale value required a promissory note/security agreement and additional security, such as a lien on real estate. 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 funds can be used to build or upgrade permanent facilities to store commodities. Eligible commodities include grains, oilseeds, peanuts, pulse crops, hay, honey, renewable biomass commodities, fruits and vegetables. Qualified facilities include grain bins, hay barns and cold storage facilities for fruits and vegetables.

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

### Select Farm Loan Interest Rates for February 2015

Farm Operating Loans – Direct	2.625%
Farm Ownership Loans – Direct	3.75%
Farm Ownership Loans – Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer	1.50%
Emergency Loans	2.625%
Farm Storage Facility Loan – Please call for current rate	
Commodity Loans	1.125%

### **Payment Limitations**

A maximum dollar amount that can be received annually, directly or indirectly, under various programs by a person or legal entity is established by statute.

Such limitations on payments are controlled by direct attribution.

Direct attribution means that program payments made:

- Directly or indirectly to a person are combined with the pro rata interest held in any legal entity that received payment, unless the payments to the legal entity have been reduced by the pro rata share of the person.
- Directly to a legal entity are attributed to those persons that have a direct and indirect interest in the legal entity, unless the payments to the legal entity have been reduced by the pro rata share of the person.

Payment attribution to a legal entity is tracked through four levels of ownership. If any part of the ownership interest at the fourth level is owned by another legal entity, a reduction in payment will be applied to the payment entity in the amount that represents the indirect interest of the fourth level entity in the payment entity.

For the purposes of the direct attribution of payments, ownership interest that a person or legal entity holds in a legal entity on June 1 of the current year is used. Direct attribution of payments is not applicable to cooperative associations of producers. The payments will instead be attributed to the members of the association that produced the commodities marketed by the association on behalf of the members.

### **Actively Engaged in Farming**

Producers who participate in the Price Loss Coverage or Agricultural Risk Coverage programs are required to provide significant contributions to the farming operation to be considered as “actively engaged in farming.” The Act requires the Secretary to promulgate regulations to define “significant contribution of active personal management” as part of this determination.

### **Adjusted Gross Income**

Adjusted gross income (AGI) provisions have been simplified and modified. Producers whose average AGI exceeds \$900,000 are not eligible to receive payments or benefits from most programs administered by FSA and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Previous AGI provisions distinguished between farm and non-farm AGI.

### **FSA Signature Policy**

Using the correct signature when doing business with 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 CCC 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.

### **Power of Attorney**

For those who find it difficult to visit the county office personally because of work schedules, distance, health, etc., FSA has a power of attorney form available that enables you to designate another person to conduct your business at the office. If you are interested, please contact our office or any Farm Service Agency office near you for more information.

### **Bank Account Changes**

Current policy mandates that FSA payments be electronically transferred into your bank account. In order for timely payments to be made, producers need to notify the FSA county office if your account has been changed or if another financial institution purchases your bank. Payments can be delayed if the FSA office is not aware of updates to your account and routing numbers.

### **Appeal Process**

After an FSA official makes a decision on your request for USDA services or application, you will be sent a letter informing you of the decision and options you can pursue if you disagree.

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

### **Civil Rights Complaint Process**

Any person, class or group of persons may file a discrimination complaint within 180 days of an alleged discriminatory action. Complaints may be filed in writing or orally with the agency head, any designated agency official or the Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Assistance in filing a complaint can be obtained by calling or visiting any FSA office.

### **Customer Statement**

January signals the beginning of a new year, and a time to start thinking about filing taxes. Producers who have signed up for a USDA eAuthentication Level 2 account will be able to access their farm data via their Customer Statement.

The Customer Statement puts a range of USDA services and programs into a single report that’s at your fingertips and available online, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

### **Foreign Buyers Notification**

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

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.

### **Controlled Substance**

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

### **Weather Reporters**

Additional weather reporters are always welcome from both Cortland and Tompkins County. Daily weather conditions are recorded and turned in monthly to create an average for the county. This information is used for various disaster programs – in both current and future sign-ups. Variations occur across the county, so the more reporters we have, the more accurate the reports in your area. If you would like to join in, call the office.

## Increased Loan Opportunities for Producers

The 2014 Farm Bill offers increased opportunities for producers including farm loan program modifications that create flexibility for new and existing farmers.

The Farm Bill expands lending opportunities for thousands of farmers and ranchers to begin and continue operations, including greater flexibility in determining eligibility, raising loan limits, and emphasizing beginning and socially disadvantaged producers.

Changes that will take effect immediately include:

- Elimination of loan term limits for guaranteed operating loans.
- Modification of the definition of beginning farmer, using 30% of the average farm size for the county as a qualifier instead of the median farm size.
- Modification of the Joint Financing Direct Farm Ownership Interest Rate to 2 percent less than regular Direct Farm Ownership rate, with a floor of 2.5 percent. Previously, the rate was established at 5 percent.
- Increase of the maximum loan amount for Direct Farm Ownership Down Payment Loans from \$225,000 to \$300,000.
- Elimination of rural residency requirement for Youth Loans, allowing urban youth to benefit.
- Debt forgiveness on Youth Loans, which will not prevent borrowers from obtaining additional loans from the federal government, such as school loans.
- Increase of the guarantee amount on Conservation Loans, for commercial lenders, from 75 to 80 percent and 90 percent for socially disadvantaged borrowers and beginning farmers.
- Microloans will not count toward loan term limits for veterans and beginning farmers.

Additional modifications must be implemented through the rulemaking processes. Visit the [FSA Farm Bill website](#) for detailed information and updates to farm loan programs.

## 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 % 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](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)

## Guaranteed Loan Program

The Farm Service Agency loan limit for the Guaranteed Loan Program is \$1,392,000. The limit is adjusted annually based on data compiled by the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

The maximum combined guaranteed and direct farm loan indebtedness is \$1,692,000.

As a reminder, the one-time loan origination fee charged on FSA guaranteed farm ownership and operating loans is 1.5 percent of the guaranteed portion of the loan. Producers should contact their local FSA County Offices with questions about farm loans.

## NY FARM NET

If you need free, confidential help concerning your farm, call NY Farm Net at 1-800-547-3276. There is someone there to answer your call Monday – Thursday 9-4 and Friday 9-3



## Youth Loans

The Farm Service Agency makes loans to youths to establish and operate income-producing projects in connection with 4-H clubs, FFA and other structured agricultural groups.

Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is \$5000.

### Youth Loan Eligibility Requirements:

- Be a citizen of the United States (which includes Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) or a legal resident alien
- Be 10 years to 20 years of age
- Comply with FSA's general eligibility requirements
- Be unable to get a loan from other sources
- Conduct a modest income-producing project in a supervised program of work as outlined above
- Demonstrate capability of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. The project supervisor must recommend the project and the loan, along with providing adequate supervision.

Stop by the county office for help preparing and processing the application forms.

## Microloan Cap Grows to \$50,000

Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds farmers and ranchers that the FSA borrowing limit for microloans increased from \$35,000 to \$50,000, effective Nov. 7. Microloans offer borrowers simplified lending with less paperwork.

The microloan change allows beginning, small and mid-sized farmers to access an additional \$15,000 in loans using a simplified application process with up to seven years to repay. Microloans are part of USDA's continued commitment to small and midsized farming operations.

To complement the microloan program additional changes to FSA eligibility requirements will enhance beginning farmers and ranchers access to land, a key barrier to entry level producers. FSA policies related to farm experience have changed so that other types of skills may be considered to meet the direct farming experience required for farm ownership loan eligibility. Operation or management of non-farm businesses, leadership positions while serving in the military or advanced education in an agricultural field will now count towards the experience applicants need to show when applying for farm ownership loans.

Please review the FSA [Microloan Program Fact Sheet](#) for program application, eligibility and related information.

## Loans for the Socially Disadvantaged

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 purchase or improve farms or ranches.

While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, the FSA has provided priority funding for members of Socially Disadvantaged Applicants. A socially disadvantaged 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 a group without regard to his or her individual qualities. For purposes of this program, socially disadvantaged 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.



### **This Newsletter...**



FSA will assist persons by providing information in a variety of different ways. However, because of limits on resources, publication efforts by FSA may or may not be by direct mail or on an individual producer basis.

FSA satisfies its responsibility of publication by making broad program announcements (press releases, public internet sites, print and electronic media, Federal register documents, radio and television announcements) and in posting program information in USDA County Offices.

The reality of limited resources has increased a participant's responsibility for being aware or making themselves aware of program information that is available in the public domain. FSA is not responsible for reaching out to every potential program participant with all program information. Participants must seek information on program details from FSA and not wait for FSA to write or communicate with them about program provisions.

### **FSA's GovDelivery**

The USDA Farm Service Agency offices have moved to a paperless news distribution system. Producers are asked to enroll in the new GovDelivery system, which provides notices, newsletters and electronic reminders instead of a hard copy through the mail. FSA, like many other organizations, is trying to work smarter and be more efficient. Moving to electronic notifications via email helps conserve resources and save taxpayer dollars. Producers can now subscribe to receive free email updates by going to [www.fsa.usda.gov/subscribe](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/subscribe)

### **NRCS Updates**

**Cortland County NRCS**  
1 North Main Street  
Cortland, NY 13045  
(607)753-0851 x3



**Tompkins County NRCS**  
903 Hanshaw Road  
Ithaca, NY 14850  
(607)257-2737

Following the approval of the 2014 Farm Bill, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has the following programs available on a continuous sign-up basis:

- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) – financial and technical assistance for agricultural land easements (formally the Grassland Reserve Program and the Farm and Ranch Land Protection Programs) and wetland easements (formally the Wetlands Reserve Program)
  - Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA) – financial and technical assistance for micro-irrigation systems
  - Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) – helps agricultural producers maintain and improve existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resource concerns
  - Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) – financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns – Focus Areas include, Livestock Waste; Grazing; Forestry; Wildlife Habitat; Organic; Ag-Energy and Seasonal High Tunnels
- Contact your local NRCS office for additional information on the above programs and for landowner and land eligibility requirements.

### **Save Time – Make an Appointment with FSA**

As we roll out the Farm Bill programs administered by FSA, there will be related signups and in some cases multiple management decisions that need to be made by you, the producer, in consult with FSA staff. To insure maximum use of your time and to insure that you are afforded our full attention to your important business needs, please call our office ahead of your visit to set an appointment and to discuss any records or documentation that you may need to have with you when you arrive for your appointment. For local FSA Service Center contact information, please visit:

<http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app> .

### **SWCD NEWS**

**Cortland County SWCD**  
100 Grange Place  
Cortland, NY 13045  
(607)756-5991  
[www.cortlandswcd.org](http://www.cortlandswcd.org)



**Tompkins County SWCD**  
170 Bostwick Rd  
Ithaca, NY 14850  
(607)257-2340  
[www.tompkinscountyny.gov/swcd](http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/swcd)

### **Spring Planting Sale**

Cortland SWCD is currently accepting orders for their annual spring planting sale. Tree, shrubs and supplies are available. Orders must be pre-paid and in office by April 3, 2015. Please visit [www.cortlandswcd.org](http://www.cortlandswcd.org) for details.

### **Cortland SWCD Fish Sale**

Cortland SWCD's spring fish sale for pond stocking is scheduled for Saturday, May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at the Cortland SWCD office. They will be offering the following varieties of fish: rainbow trout, largemouth bass, channel catfish, yellow perch, grass carp and fathead minnows. The order form and pricing information will be available soon so please check the SWCD website or feel free to call for more information.

### **Ag Assessment Reminder**

Landowners filing for an agricultural assessment in 2015 must file applications with their local assessor by March 1<sup>st</sup>. To complete an application for an agricultural assessment, landowners must have a Soil Group Worksheet (SGW) prepared by the SWCD for each tax parcel they intend to enroll. Landowners who have previously had a SGW completed for a tax parcel do not need a new one unless ownership, parcel acreage or land use has changed.

Landowners participating in the program for the first time, or those who need a revised SGW, should make an appointment with the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) before Friday, February 20<sup>th</sup>. When calling, have the appropriate tax map number, location, and acreage for each parcel available. This information can be found on the most recent tax bill. A fee of \$50.00 will be charged for each SGW.

Agricultural land does not automatically receive an agricultural assessment. Landowners must apply each year to remain eligible. For more information, contact your local assessor or Real Property Tax Service at 753-5040 (Cortland) or 274-5517 (Tompkins). Contact your local SWCD to make an appointment for your SGW today.

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