



Fact Sheet

County Committee Election

Overview

The election of agricultural producers to Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees is important to ALL farmers and ranchers with large or small operations. It is crucial that every eligible producer participate in these elections because FSA county committees are a link between the agricultural community and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Committee members are a critical component of the operations of FSA. They help deliver FSA farm programs at the local level. Farmers and ranchers who serve on committees help with the decisions necessary to administer the programs in their counties. They work to make FSA agricultural programs serve the needs of local producers.

Committees provide local input on:

- Commodity price support loans and payments;
- Conservation programs;
- Incentive, indemnity and disaster payments for some commodities; and
- Emergency programs.

FSA committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws. Committee members apply their judgment and knowledge to make local decisions.

Election Period

June 15, 2008 - Nomination period begins. Request nomination forms from the local USDA Service Center or obtain online at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov> under News & Events/County Committee Elections.

August 1, 2008 - Last day to file nomination forms at the local USDA Service Center.

November 3, 2008 - Ballots mailed to eligible voters.

December 1, 2008 - Last day to return voted ballots to the USDA Service Center.

January 1, 2009 - Newly elected committee members take office.

Who Can Vote

Agricultural producers of legal voting age can vote if they participate or cooperate in any FSA program. A person who is not of legal voting age but supervises and conducts the farming operations of an entire farm can also vote.

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." Producers may contact their local USDA Service Center for more information.

Nominations

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. This form is available at USDA Service Centers and online at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov> under News & Events/County Committee Elections.

Nomination forms for the 2008 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA Service Center by close of business on Aug. 1, 2008.

Agricultural producers who participate or cooperate in an FSA program may be nominated for candidacy for the committee. Individuals may nominate themselves or others as a candidate. Additionally, organizations representing minority and women farmers or ranchers may nominate candidates. The nominee must reside in the county or multi-county jurisdiction.

Don't Miss Out on Voting

Ballots will be mailed to voters by Nov. 3, 2008, and must be returned to the FSA county office or postmarked by Dec. 1, 2008. Eligible voters may contact their local FSA county office before the final date to return ballots if they do 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 minority and women producers. Minority persons are African Americans, American Indians or Alaska Natives, Hispanics, Asians, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders. The guidelines govern the FSA county committee election process and are designed to increase participation by minorities and women.

The following are just some of the specifics of the guidelines that are now in effect:

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

To read the guidelines in their entirety, visit the County Committee Elections page at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>

Role of Advisors

In addition to elected 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 minority or women producers and lack such members on FSA county committees. Advisors play an important role by providing diverse viewpoints and by representing the interests of 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

For more information about FSA county committees, visit <http://www.fsa.usda.gov> on the World Wide Web or your local USDA Service Center.

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