

**§ 792.7**

**7 CFR Ch. VII (1-1-05 Edition)**

applied. If the debtor does not designate the application of a voluntary installment or partial payment, the payment will be applied to such debts as determined by FSA.

**§ 792.7 Collection by administrative offset.**

(a) The provisions of this section shall apply to all debts due FSA except as otherwise provided in this part and part 1404 of this title. This section is not applicable to:

(1) FSA requests for administrative offset against money payable to a debtor from the Civil Service Retirement and Disability Fund and FSA requests for salary offset against a present, former or retired employee of the Federal Government which shall be made in accordance with regulations at part 3 of this title;

(2) FSA requests for administrative offset against a Federal income tax refund payable to a debtor which shall be made in accordance with § 792.19;

(3) Cases in which FSA must adjust, by increasing or decreasing, a payment which is to be paid under a contract in order to properly make other payments due by FSA; and

(4) Any case in which a statute explicitly provides for or prohibits using administrative offset to collect the debt for the type of debt involved.

(b) Debts due FSA or CCC may be collected by administrative offset from amounts payable by FSA when:

(1) The debtor has been provided written notification of the basis and amount of the debt and has been given an opportunity to make payment. Such written notification and opportunity includes notice of the right to pursue an administrative appeal in accordance with part 780 of this chapter or any other applicable appeal procedures, if not previously provided;

(2) The debtor has been provided an opportunity to request to inspect and copy the records of FSA related to the debt;

(3) The debtor has been given the opportunity to enter into a written agreement which is acceptable to FSA for repayment of the debt;

(4) The debtor has been notified in writing that the debt will be collected

by administrative offset if not paid; and

(5) The debt has not been delinquent for more than ten years or legal action to enforce the debt has not been barred by an applicable period of limitation, whichever is later.

(c) Administrative offset shall also be effected against amounts payable by FSA:

(1) When requested or approved by the Department of Justice; or

(2) When a person is indebted under a judgment in favor of FSA or the United States.

(d) A payment due any person may be offset when there is a breach of a contract or a violation of FSA program requirements, and offset is considered necessary by FSA to protect the financial interests of the Government.

(e) FSA may effect administrative offset against a payment to be made to a debtor prior to completion of the procedures required by paragraphs (b)(1) through (b)(4) of this section if:

(1) Failure to take the offset would substantially prejudice FSA' ability to collect the debt; and

(2) The time before the payment is to be made does not reasonably permit the completion of those procedures.

(f)(1) Judgments in favor of the United States may be offset against any amounts payable by FSA based on information provided by or obtained from the Department of Justice. Debts due any agency other than FSA which have not been reduced to judgment shall be offset against amounts payable by FSA to a debtor when an agency of the U.S. Government has submitted a written request for offset which is mailed or hand-delivered to the appropriate FSA State office, Kansas City Financial Management Office, Kansas City Management Office, or Kansas City Commodity Office. Such written request must:

(i) Bear the signature of an authorized representative of the requesting agency;

(ii) Include a certification that all requirements of the law and the regulations for collection of the debt and for requesting offset have been complied with;

(iii) State the name, address (including county), and, where legally available, the Social Security number or employer ID number of the debtor, and a brief description of the basis of the debt, including identification of the judgment, if any;

(iv) State the amount of the debt separately as to principal, interest, penalties, and administrative costs. Interest, if any, shall be computed on a daily basis to a date shown in the request. The amount to be offset shall not exceed the principal sum owed by the debtor, plus interest computed in accordance with the request, and any late payment interest, penalties and administrative costs that have been assessed;

(v) Certify that the debtor has not filed for bankruptcy. If the debtor has filed for bankruptcy, a copy of the order of the bankruptcy court relieving the agency from the automatic stay must be included; and

(vi) State the name, address, and telephone number of a contact person within the agency and the address to which payment should be sent.

(2) Unless prohibited by law, the head of an agency, or a designee, may defer or subordinate in whole or in part the right of the agency to recover through offset all or part of any indebtedness to such agency, or may withdraw a request for offset. Notice of such action must be sent to the appropriate FSA office.

(g)(1) After FSA has complied with the provisions of this part, FSA may request other agencies of the Government to offset amounts payable by them to persons indebted to FSA.

(2) In the case of a request to IRS for a tax refund offset, the provisions at § 792.19 shall apply.

(h)(1) Debts shall be collected by offset in the following order of priority without regard to the date of the request for such collection:

(i) Debts to FSA.

(ii) Debts to other agencies of USDA as determined by FSA.

(iii) Debts to other government agencies as determined by FSA.

(2) In the case of multiple debts involving the same debtor, FSA may, at its discretion, deviate from the usual order of priority in applying recovered

amounts to debts owed other agencies when considered to be in the Government's best interest. Such decision shall be made by FSA based on the facts and circumstances of the particular case.

(i) Amounts recovered by offset for FSA and CCC debts but later found not to be owed to the Government shall be promptly refunded.

(j) The debtor shall be notified whenever any offset action has been taken.

(k) Offsets made pursuant to this section shall not deprive a debtor of any right he or she might otherwise have to contest the debt involved in the offset action either by administrative appeal or by legal action.

(l) Any action authorized by the provisions of this section may be taken:

(1) Against a debtor's pro rata share of payments due any entity which the debtor participates in, either directly or indirectly, as determined by FSA.

(2) When FSA determines that the debtor has established an entity, or reorganized, transferred ownership of, or changed in some other manner, their operation, for the purpose of avoiding the payment of the claim or debt.

(m) The amount to be offset shall not exceed the actual or estimated amount of the debt, including interest, administrative charges, and penalties, unless the Department of Justice requests that a larger specified amount be offset.

(n) Offset action will not be taken against payments when:

(1) A debt has been discharged as provided in § 792.16.

(2) FSA determines such action will unduly interfere with the administration of an FSA or CCC program.

(3) The debt has been delinquent for more than ten years or legal action to enforce the debt due FSA is barred by an applicable period of limitation, whichever is later.

[59 FR 15829, Apr. 5, 1994, as amended at 60 FR 43706, Aug. 23, 1995]

#### **§ 792.8 Priorities of offsets versus assignments.**

(a) No amounts payable to a debtor by FSA shall be paid to an assignee until there have been collected any amounts owed by the debtor except as provided in this section.