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AGRICULTURE

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**Next County Committee Meeting**

**September 9, 2014**

**Farm Service Agency**

**Chatham County Farm Service Agency**

# Newsletter

**JULY 2014**



## COC NOMINATION DEADLINE

The election of agricultural producers to Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees is important to farmers and ranchers. 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). County 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 county committees help with the decisions necessary to administer the programs in their counties. They work to ensure FSA agricultural programs serve the needs of local producers. FSA county committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws. County committee members apply their judgment and knowledge to make local decisions. **The COC nomination period runs through August 1, 2014.** The area electing in 2014 is the west end of the county: Albright, Bear Creek, and Matthews townships. The nomination form is available at the Chatham County FSA Office and online at [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).



## TREE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TAP) SIGN-UP

Orchardists and nursery tree growers who experienced losses from natural disasters that occurred on or after Oct. 1, 2011, can sign up for the Tree Assistance Program (TAP). TAP provides financial assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant

or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines damaged by natural disasters. Eligible tree types include trees, bushes or vines that produce an annual crop for commercial purposes. Nursery trees include ornamental, fruit, nut and Christmas trees that are produced for commercial sale. **Trees used for pulp or timber are ineligible.** To qualify for TAP, orchardists must suffer a qualifying tree, bush or vine loss in excess of 15 percent mortality from an eligible natural disaster. The eligible trees, bushes or vines must have been owned when the natural disaster occurred. If the TAP application is approved, the eligible trees, bushes and vines must be replaced within 12 months from the date the application is approved. The cumulative total quantity of acres planted to trees, bushes or vines, for which a producer can receive TAP payments, cannot exceed 500 acres annually.

## CLEARING LAND

The term "swampbuster" is used when a producer converts a wetland to make possible the planting of a crop. Please keep in mind that land may be classified as a wetland and not appear wet to you. It may have hydric soils or have wetland vegetation and it may be a small area, but the consequences of clearing that small patch may be huge. The only way to know if you have a classified wetland on your farm is to have a NRCS determination. To avoid any violations, it is strongly recommended that land that will be cleared have a wetland determination from NRCS **BEFORE** clearing. **Producers clearing land for pasture especially need to have a wetland determination.** If a producer inadvertently clears an area that is considered wetland, then that producer could be ineligible for all USDA benefits on any land they own or operate. Benefits could include disaster payments, crop insurance, or conservation payments. Converting wetlands to cropland or pasture use is a violation of swampbuster provisions. Once the land is cleared in violation it is too late to be in compliance.

United States  
Department  
Of Agriculture  
Chatham County Farm Service Agency  
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PRESORTED STANDARD  
US POSTAGE  
PAID

Official Business



**GENERAL REMINDERS**

- **Report losses on NAP crops or any other crops within 15 days of loss**
- **Report changes in farm operation or farm ownership timely**
- **Report any banking changes affecting direct deposit**

**NEWSLETTERS BY EMAIL**

Due to budget constraints, most newsletters are being emailed. The county office will be able to mail newsletters only 2 times this fiscal year, and the next fiscal year may bring less than that. If you wish to continue to receive these newsletters, the county office will need your email address. If we do not have your email address, please forward it to:  
[vonetta.french@nc.usda.gov](mailto:vonetta.french@nc.usda.gov) or [lori.andrews@nc.usda.gov](mailto:lori.andrews@nc.usda.gov) or you can call or stop by the county office and give it to us. If you do not have email, please feel free to call or visit the office for any program updates.

**MICROLOANS**

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) developed the Microloan (ML) program to better serve the unique financial operating needs of beginning, niche and small family farm operations. FSA offers applicants a Microloan designed to help farmers with credit needs of \$35,000 or less. The loan features a streamlined application process built to fit the needs of new and smaller producers. This loan program will also be useful to specialty crop producers and operators of community supported agriculture (CSA). Eligible applicants can apply for a maximum amount of \$35,000 to pay for initial start-up expenses such as hoop houses to extend the growing season, essential tools, irrigation and annual expenses such as seed, fertilizer, utilities, land rents, marketing, and distribution expenses. As financing needs increase, applicants can apply for a regular operating loan up to the maximum amount of \$300,000 or obtain financing from a commercial lender under FSA's Guaranteed Loan Program. Individuals who are interested in applying for a microloan or would like to discuss other farm loan programs available should contact Bill Rhodes at 704-788-2107 ext 115.



**2012 & 2013 ELAP LOSSES FOR HONEYBEE,  
AND FARM-RAISED FISH LOSSES**

Producers who suffered eligible honeybee or farm-raised fish losses have until August 1, 2014, to submit a notice of loss and application for payment under the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP). ELAP provides emergency assistance to eligible producers of honeybees and

farm-raised fish that have losses due to disease, adverse weather, or other conditions, such as blizzards and wildfires. ELAP assistance is provided for losses not covered by the Livestock Forage Program (LFP) and Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP). Producers who suffered eligible honeybee or farm-raised fish losses during 2012 and 2013 program years must submit a notice of loss and application for payment to their local FSA office by August 1, 2014. For 2014 program year losses, the notice of loss and an application for payment must be submitted by November 1, 2014. For more information, producers can review the ELAP Fact Sheet on the [Farm Bill webpage](#). Producers are encouraged to make an appointment with their local FSA office to apply for these programs.



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**OFFICE CLOSINGS**

The Chatham County FSA Office will be closed for holidays on the following days:

SEPTEMBER 1	LABOR DAY
OCTOBER 13	COLUMBUS DAY
NOVEMBER 11	VETERAN'S DAY
NOVEMBER 27	THANKSGIVING
DECEMBER 25	CHRISTMAS DAY
JANUARY 1	NEW YEAR'S DAY

