

Breaking New Ground

Agricultural producers are reminded to consult with FSA and NRCS before breaking out new ground for production purposes as doing so without prior authorization may put a producer's federal farm program benefits in jeopardy. This is especially true for land that must meet Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions. The term "sodbusting" is used to identify the plowing up of erosion-prone lands for use as cropland. Sodbuster violations are unauthorized tillage practices on highly erodible lands. Farmers should be aware that if they use highly erodible land for crop production **WITHOUT** proper conservation measures, they risk losing eligibility to participate in USDA programs such as ARC/PLC, loans, and crop insurance. 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). Before producers clear, plow or otherwise prepare areas not presently under crop production for planting, they are required to file an AD-1026, indicating the area to be brought into production. If NRCS indicates that the area will be highly erodible land, the producer will be required to develop and implement a conservation plan on the affected acreage before bringing land into production.

The term "swampbuster" is used when a producer converts a wetland to make possible the planting of a crop. **This includes land that is being cleared for pasture.** To avoid this possibility 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. 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.

Reminders

Bank Account Changes

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

Dates to Remember

* The last day to report acreage devoted grazing or hay acres is **November 15, 2016**.

* The last day to apply for NAP coverage on grazing or hay acres is **November 21, 2016**. This coverage works like insurance. If there is a qualifying drought, it will generate a payment on pasture acres. The service fee is \$250 per crop. Please call the county office if you would like more information.

* If you have damage to crops from adverse weather, it must be reported within 15 days of the date of the damage. If you have lost livestock from adverse weather, it must be reported within 30 days of the date of the loss. Please take pictures of the crop damage or the livestock lost as soon as possible

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in a meeting should contact Claudia A Austin at 919-542-2244 extension 2 or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339.

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