

Farm Service Urges Farmers and Ranchers to Vote

Farm Service Agency (FSA) Administrator Juan M. Garcia announced today that the 2012 FSA county committee elections will begin on Monday, Nov. 5, with the mailing of ballots to eligible voters. The deadline to return the ballots to local FSA offices is Dec. 3, 2012.

"The role and input of our county committee members is more vital than ever," said Garcia. "New county committee members provide input and make important decisions on the local administration of disaster and conservation programs. With better participation in recent years, we also have seen promising increases in the number of women and minority candidates."

Eligible voters who do not receive ballots in the coming week can obtain ballots from their local USDA Service Center. Dec. 3, 2012, is the last day for voters to submit ballots in person to local USDA Service Centers. Ballots returned by mail must also be postmarked no later than Dec. 3. Newly elected committee members and their alternates will take office Jan. 1, 2013.

To be an eligible voter, farmers and ranchers must participate or cooperate in an FSA program. A person who is not of legal voting age, but supervises and conducts the farming operations of an entire farm also may be eligible to vote. Agricultural producers in each county submitted candidate nominations during the nomination period, which ended Aug. 1.

While FSA county committees do not approve or deny farm operating loans, they make decisions on disaster and conservation programs, emergency programs, commodity price support loan programs and other agricultural issues. Members serve three-year terms. Nationwide, there are about 7,700 farmers and ranchers serving on FSA county committees. Committees consist of three to 11 members that are elected by eligible producers.

More information on county committees, such as the new 2012 fact sheet and brochures, can be found on the FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov/elections or at a local USDA Service Center.