



National Association of FSA County Office Employees

Celebrating over 50 Years of Serving American Agriculture

1959-2012

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2012 Farm Bill and Farm Service Agency

The National Association of FSA County Office Employees (NASCOE) understands the importance of passing farm legislation which is responsive to solving the budget deficit. We also view the Farm Bill as an immense opportunity for Congress and the Administration to meet agricultural challenges and to develop a comprehensive farm safety net. Efficient delivery of federal farm programs and outstanding customer service is and always will be a consistent theme for NASCOE. NASCOE stands ready with Congress in moving forward with modern farm programs to improve efficiency, customer service, and develop a 21st Century U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

NASCOE represents the county office employees of the Farm Service Agency (FSA). FSA's infrastructure and highly trained and dedicated employees are prepared to serve the agricultural community with current farm programs and any new programs that are implemented. Our unique County Committee System allows programs to be tailored to meet the diverse needs of our rural communities and provide oversight for the prevention of program fraud and abuse.

It is imperative that Congress eliminate duplication of services in USDA to lessen current budget challenges. Performing business as usual is not an option when taxpayers and the country are suffering. NASCOE has identified numerous areas that can provide substantial budget savings in program delivery.

- Duplication of duties and waste is most evident in crop reporting and production reporting. Farmers and ranchers report their planted acreages and production to the Farm Service Agency, Risk Management Agency and National Agricultural Statistics Service. FSA takes the **ONLY** comprehensive report that can meet the needs of all USDA stakeholders. All other agencies only take partial reports to meet their needs. According to a recent Informa Economics study it was determined that 98 percent of interviewees reported FSA county offices either directly or indirectly provided crop acreage reports to crop insurance agents. According to the same study Insurance companies are currently paid **\$1.3 billion annually** for administrative functions and a majority of those functions are completed by FSA first.
- Claims administration is another area of overlapping service. The majority of adjusters visit the FSA office to obtain necessary data prior to working claims. This data may include acreage reports, maps, eligibility forms, weather data and yield information. Streamlining the claims process would not only save time and money but would increase program integrity by having a third party involved that is not dependent upon the outcome of the claim process for future business. Government Accounting Office (GAO) audits have repeatedly recommended FSA be given responsibility of claims processing for the Risk Management Agency (RMA) to dramatically reduce erroneous payments and significantly reduce government outlays. The reports clearly document the savings by the use of existing data that FSA already maintains for all program regulatory requirements. The reports have identified hundreds of millions of dollars in savings.
- The administration of conservation programs is another area of duplication. NASCOE contends that Congress will save significant taxpayer dollars by eliminating two payment systems and assigning all phases of Conservation defined as "administrative" (receiving applications, contract maintenance, and processing payments) to FSA. All phases of conservation programs defined as "technical" (e.g. practice development, on site determinations, and contract compliance) should be maintained by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). This proposed assignment of duties has proven very effective and responsive in previous Farm Bills and puts NRCS staff "back in the field."

In conclusion, the implementation of any commodity title and conservation programs are going to be dependent on the base farm records layer and Common Land Unit GIS layer maintained exclusively by FSA. Therefore, efficient federal farm program delivery needs to remain with FSA. NASCOE wants Congress to know that our employees are prepared to deliver farm programs in the most efficient and cost effective manner possible. When disasters strike and our farmers face challenges that require an urgent and knowledgeable response, there is no other agency that has a better record in performance of program delivery. The Farm Service Agency has new technological tools coming available to us now and our strongest assets are our employees. These programs assure that the United States continues to provide the most inexpensive, abundant and safest food supply to the world. NASCOE prides itself in the unselfish attitude that our employees exhibit as they understand that our ultimate responsibility is doing our part to deliver essential service while contributing significantly in methods aimed at reducing the federal deficit. NASCOE respectfully offers our members as a resource for Congress to use in the development of the 2012 Farm Bill.