USDA Farm Service Agency
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

County Committee Elections

Overview

Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA and allow grassroots input and local administration of federal farm programs.

Farmers and ranchers who are elected to serve on FSA county committees apply using their judgment and knowledge to help with the decisions necessary to administer FSA programs in their counties, ensuring the needs of local producers are met. FSA county committees operate within official federal regulations and provide local input on:

- Income safety-net loans and payments, including setting county average yields for commodities;
- Conservation programs;
- Incentive, indemnity, and disaster payments for some commodities;
- Emergency programs; and
- Payment eligibility.

Every eligible agricultural producer should participate in FSA county committee elections–whether a beginning or established producer, historically underserved producer (minority and women), or whether a large or small operation–because FSA county committees are producers' link with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Election Period

Mid-June
The nomination period begins. Request nomination forms from the local FSA county office or obtain online at **fsa.usda.gov/elections.**

Early August
Nomination forms are filed at the local FSA county office.

Early November
Ballots mailed to eligible voters.

Early December
Voted ballots are returned to the local FSA county office.

January 1
Newly elected county committee members take office.

**An election calendar can be found at fsa.usda.gov/elections or by contacting your local FSA office.*

Local Administrative Areas

A county or multi-county jurisdiction served by an FSA county committee is divided into 3 to 11 local administrative areas (LAA). Each LAA is represented by one member on the FSA county committee. A person may only vote in one LAA (the LAA in which he or she participates or cooperates in FSA programs or programs administered by FSA).

Individuals can identify the LAA they or their farming interests are located in via a county committee election GIS locator tool on fsa.usda.gov/elections.

Multiple Farm Interests in Same County or Area

Eligible voters who participate or cooperate in FSA programs on separate farms in more than one LAA in the same county or multi-county jurisdiction may only cast one ballot. Such voters must choose only one LAA in which they wish to cast their ballots.

Multi-County Jurisdictions

Eligible voters with separate farming interests in more than one county or in more than one FSA county committee jurisdiction (which may include more than one county) are eligible to vote in each election conducted for each jurisdiction's committee. Voting is limited to one LAA in which farming interests are located per each FSA county committee jurisdiction. Only one vote may be cast in each county or multi-county jurisdiction.

Guidance documents lack the force and effect of law, unless expressly authorized by statute or incorporated into a contract. USDA may not cite, use, or rely on any guidance that is not available through their guidance portal, except to establish historical facts.

Who is Eligible to Hold Office?

To hold office as an FSA county committee member, a person must meet each of the basic eligibility requirements described below:

1. Be eligible to vote in an FSA county committee election.
2. Reside in the LAA that is up for election.
3. A person must not have been:
   - Removed or disqualified from:
     - FSA county committee membership or alternate membership, or
     - FSA employment.
   - Removed for cause from any public office or have been convicted of fraud, larceny, embezzlement or any other felony.
   - Dishonorably discharged from any branch of the armed services.

Nominations

Agricultural producers who participate or cooperate in an FSA program may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee. Individuals may nominate themselves or others as a candidate. In addition, organizations representing underserved (minority and women) farmers or ranchers may nominate candidates.

To become a nominee, eligible individuals must sign nomination form FSA-669A. The form includes a statement that the nominee agrees to serve if elected. Nomination forms are filed in the FSA office that administers a producer's farm records and is available at the FSA county office or online at fsa.usda.gov/elections.

All nomination forms must be postmarked or received in the local FSA county office by the August deadline.

Who Can Vote

The following requirements must be met for a person to be eligible to vote in county committee elections:

1. Be of legal voting age or, if not of legal voting age, supervise and conduct the farming operation of an entire farm.
2. Have an interest in a farm or ranch as either:
   - An individual who meets one or more of the following:
     - Is eligible and capable to vote in one's own right.
     - Is a partner of a general partnership.
     - Is a member of a joint venture.
3. Participates or cooperates in any FSA program that is provided for by law. A cooperating producer is someone who has provided information about their farming or ranching operation(s) but may not have applied or received FSA program benefits.

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Customers who are uncertain about their eligibility to vote in the FSA county committee election should contact their local FSA office. Affirmation of eligibility to vote must be determined in order for a vote to count in an election.

Ballots will be mailed to eligible voters in early November and must be returned to the FSA county office or postmarked by the December deadline. During the election period, individuals not receiving a ballot in the mail may obtain a ballot directly from their FSA county office.

American Indian Tribal Lands

Members of American Indian tribes holding agricultural land are eligible to vote in an FSA county committee election if the tribal member meets the voting requirements. For purposes of FSA county committee elections, every member of an American Indian tribe is considered an agricultural landowner if the land on which the tribal member's voting eligibility is based is tribally owned or held in trust by the United States for the tribe, even if the individual does not personally produce a crop on that land. Members should contact their local FSA county office to update their voter eligibility.

For additional information on voting eligibility for members of American Indian tribes, visit fsa.usda.gov/elections.

Interpretation of Voting Eligibility for Spouses in Community Property States

In community property states, the spouse of an eligible voter is also eligible to vote.

Uniform Guidelines

USDA issued uniform guidelines for county committee elections to help ensure that FSA county committees fairly represent the agricultural producers of a county or multi-county jurisdiction, especially underserved (minority and women) producers. Targeted underserved producers are African-Americans, American Indians or Alaska Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders. In addition to minority and women producers, USDA strongly encourages beginning farmers to actively seek a position on a county committee. The guidelines govern the FSA county committee election process and are designed to increase participation of underserved (minorities and women).

The following are just some of the specifics of the guidelines:

- If no valid nominations are filed, the Secretary of Agriculture may nominate up to two individuals to be placed on the ballot.
- FSA county committees annually review LAA boundaries to ensure the fair representation of minority and women producers in their county or multi-county jurisdictions.
- FSA county offices locate and recruit eligible candidates identified as minority and women farmers and ranchers as potential nominees for the FSA county committee elections through outreach and publicity, including the development of partnerships with community-based organizations.

The guidelines can be found at fsa.usda.gov/elections.

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Appointed Voting Members

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 provides the Secretary of Agriculture with the authority to appoint targeted underserved committee members with voting privileges to serve on FSA county committees in county or multi-county jurisdictions that lack fair representation from those groups. Secretarial appointees do not replace elected members but join them as voting members on the committee. Individuals serving as non-voting minority advisors are encouraged to submit a nomination form. These forms are also accepted from community-based organizations representing targeted underserved producers. Targeted underserved voting members are appointed by the Secretary from the nominations received.

Role of Advisors

In addition to elected or appointed members, FSA county committees may also include non-voting minority advisors. Advisors are appointed to county committees to ensure underserved (minority or women) producers are fairly represented. Advisors play an important role by providing diverse viewpoints and by representing the interests of underserved (minorities and women) in decisions made by county committees. Anyone interested in serving as a county committee advisor may submit their request in writing to the local FSA county office. FSA state committees officially appoint advisors who are recommended by county committees or community-based organizations.

Discrimination Prohibited

USDA prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

For More Information

This fact sheet is for informational purposes only; other restrictions may apply. For program specifics or additional information about FSA county committees, visit a local USDA Service Center or the FSA county committee webpage at fsa.usda.gov/elections.

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Find your Local USDA Service Center

Find your local USDA Service Center at farmers.gov/service-locator.

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