

Providing Input into the Development of the Program Rules

How can I provide suggestions on implementation of these USDA programs?

During the period when Congress is debating the farm bill, the public can provide input into their needs to their Senators and Representatives in Congress. After the farm bill was passed by Congress, and signed by the President, the public can still have input into the development of the rules that are used to implement the farm bill programs through the Federal Register System.

What is the Federal Register?

The Federal Register publication system is a method of informing the public of the regulations affecting them. The Federal Register Act, which became law on July 26, 1935, established this uniform system for handling regulations for all agencies of the Federal Government. The Administrative Procedure Act (June 11, 1946) added the procedures for giving the public the right to participate in the rulemaking process by commenting on the rules that government employees propose to implement.

How can I make suggestions?

As the detailed rules are developed for the programs described in this brochure, each rule will be published in the Federal Register providing the public a specific timeframe in which they can submit comments. You can see what regulations have recently been published in the Federal Register at http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/_s.7_0_A/7_0_2KD?navid=FARMBILL2008. You can also find links to proposed regulations on the web pages of Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, and Rural Development.

What kind of suggestions can I make?

Comments generally help provide the writer of the regulation with suggested changes to the rules that would make the program work better for all customers. Agriculture is different in all parts of the country. Comments help the writer of the regulation understand the needs of farmers and ranchers throughout the country and helps to ensure that barriers to participation are eliminated.

Is it worth my effort to try to provide suggestions?

When comments/suggestions are received, the writer of the regulation must address each comment/suggestion and explain why it was accepted or why it was not accepted into the final rules that are used to run the program. Therefore, this system allows the public the opportunity to provide suggestions on the rules that will be used for the next few years to run the programs. Once the rules are finalized, they are not easily changed. Often the same rules will apply until the next time that a farm bill is passed by Congress. Therefore, now is a timely opportunity for providing your suggestions on the best rules to run the USDA programs.

When will proposed rules be available for comment?

Most of the proposed regulations for programs from the 2008 Farm Bill will be published in the Federal Register during the fall of 2008 and early in 2009.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W. Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).



**USDA
State
Outreach
Council**

2008 Farm Bill

Opportunities for Fruit, Vegetable, and Specialty Crop Growers



The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008

www.usda.gov

November 19, 2008



Marketing Opportunities

Agency to Contact

Purchases of Locally Produced Foods. Encourages institutions receiving funds through the 2008 Act and through the Child Nutrition Act to purchase locally grown and locally raised foods.

- The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, which provides free fresh fruits and vegetables to children in schools with at least 50% free/reduced price eligibility, is expanded nationwide for schools. Therefore, more schools will be encouraged to purchase fruits and vegetables locally.
- The Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, participating in the school lunch program, are allowed to use a geographic preference for the procurement of locally grown fruits and vegetables.
- The Emergency Food Assistance Program is increased \$1.256 billion to increase commodity purchases for food banks.

Michigan Department of Education

Department of Defense

Administered in Washington, D.C.

Specialty Crop Block Grants –Funds to State Departments of Agriculture are increased to \$55 million to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops in areas such as marketing, promotion, education, research, trade, and nutrition.

Michigan Department of Agriculture

Market Access Program (MAP)— MAP provides funding to increase the availability and viability of U.S. specialty crops in foreign markets.

Michigan Department of Agriculture

Conservation Opportunities, con't.

Agency to Contact

Conservation Technical Assistance- provides support and tools to help people conserve, maintain, and improve their natural resources.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Staff are housed in USDA Service Centers

Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative– Six percent of funds from EQIP, CSP, WHIP, and Farm & Ranch Lands Protection Program are set aside for targeted groups of producers who are members of a state/local/tribal government, producer association, or other nongovernmental organization, that has been selected through a competitive application process to enhance conservation outcomes on the land of producers within their targeted group.

Conservation Reserve Program– Offers annual rental payments, incentive payments, and cost-share payments to encourage farmers to plant long-term resource-conserving covers to improve soil, water, and wildlife resources.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) staff are housed in USDA Service Centers

Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program– Provides matching funds to help county or local governments or non-profit purchase from sellers private forests that are threatened by conversion to non-forest use and are economically, culturally, and environmentally important to communities.

To be Determined

Healthy Forest Reserve Program– Assists landowners to restore and protect forest land resources and protects at risk species. HFRP allows for 10-year cost-share agreements and 30-year easement or permanent easements.

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program—Provides matching funds to help State, tribal, or local governments and non-governmental organizations purchase development rights to keep productive farm and rangeland in agricultural uses.



