

USDA Expands CFAP Call Center Services

Friday, June 19, 2020

By Mary Jane Buerkle

USDA has expanded the scope of the CFAP Call Center to allow representatives to answer questions about and help customers complete CFAP applications, according to a notice issued earlier this week.

Initially, the Call Center served simply as a connection between the customer and their local USDA service center. However, USDA has shifted the scope to provide expanded one-on-one support, including assisting customers in completing CFAP applications. Final processing will still be handled by the respective County Office.

Farm Service Agency employees from across the nation serve as a virtual team to staff the call center. USDA also is hiring temporary employees to help process applications at the request of county offices.

Customers can reach FSA staff at the CFAP Call Center at (877) 508-8364 from 6:30 a.m.-7 p.m. Central Time.

Farm Stress - Help and Hope

June 2020

By Mary Jane Buerkle

The past few months have been a whirlwind of uncertainty, which adds to the mounting challenges farmers continue to face in this new crop year. Feelings of stress and isolation can lead to depression, substance abuse and suicide.

Plains Cotton Cooperative Association, Plains Cotton Growers, and experts at Texas Tech have teamed up to provide information about how to get help and have hope. PCCA has created a page on their website called "Farm Stress – Help and Hope" with resources and facts about mental health crisis. According to the American Farm Bureau Federation, 91% believe that financial stress or fear of losing the family farm impacts mental health.

"Every day, farmers and their families deal with factors that are beyond their control, which impact their finances, relationships, and many other aspects of their operation," PCG CEO Steve Verett said. "We urge anyone struggling with stress, depression, or suicidal thoughts to seek help, and encourage everyone to check on their family members, friends and neighbors to offer support and help during these trying times."

Resources include (but are not limited to):

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-8255. The call is free and confidential, and they will connect the caller to a counselor in their area.
- Crisis Text Line – text HOME to 741741 to be connected to a trained counselor 24/7.
- Farm Aid Farmer Hotline, 1-800-327-6243. Staff will answer calls Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern time.

More information can be found at <https://pcca.com/farm-stress-help-and-hope/>.

Important Program Deadlines

U.S. Department of Agriculture Key Programs

ARC-CO and PLC Election and Contract 2020 Crop Year

June 30

Crop Acreage Certification Deadline

July 15

Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) Application

August 28

Yield Update for PLC Program

September 30

Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program+ (WHIP+) Application

December 31

(program funds will remain available until expended or December 31)

Small Business Administration Key Programs

Paycheck Protection Program

Signup Ends June 30

Economic Injury Disaster Loan

Signup Ends December 31

NCC Commends Appointments to EPA FRRCC Committee

Wednesday, June 17, 2020 From the National Cotton Council

The National Cotton Council (NCC) commends EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler's appointments to the Farm, Ranch, and Rural Communities Committee (FRRCC).

Administrator Wheeler selected 33 members of the agricultural community to represent a variety of sectors from across the U.S., including agricultural stakeholders and allied industries; academia; state, local, and tribal government; and nongovernmental organizations.

Among the members are Stacy Smith, a cotton producer from New Home, Texas and Dr. Jeffrey Gore, a research professor at the Mississippi State University Delta Research and Extension Center in Stoneville, Mississippi.

According to EPA, the 33 nominees will constitute a new committee, and will each serve two or three year terms beginning this year. The new members of the FRRCC hail from twenty-four states and one territory in all ten U.S. EPA Regions, with six of the Members working in multiple states or at a national capacity. The Committee expects to meet approximately twice a year beginning in late Summer of 2020.

Established in 2008, the FRRCC provides independent policy advice, information, and recommendations to the EPA administrator on a range of environmental issues and policies that are of importance to agriculture and rural communities.