


# Farm/Garden

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## Federal hurricane disaster relief programs still available for state's farmers, ranchers

**MONTGOMERY** — Eight new disaster programs to help farmers and ranchers in Alabama who suffered losses due to Hurricanes Katrina or Rita in 2005 were announced by Danny Crawford, USDA Farm Service Agency State Executive Director. Sign-up began Dec. 11 for six of the programs.

The Emergency Agricultural Disaster Assistance Act of 2006 authorizes the programs. Under the Act, USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation will provide payments to eligible producers in certain counties of Alabama, and eight other states. USDA's Farm Service Agency will administer the funds.

Eligible counties are those declared primary natural disaster areas or designated a major disaster or emergency for 2005 calendar-year hurricanes Katrina, Ophelia, Wilma or Rita. Counties contiguous to a primary county are also eligible. The Act did not include counties declared disaster areas by Hurricane Dennis. Program fact sheets include the list of eligible counties, as well as program details, and can be found online at [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov), and click on Disaster Assistance Programs. To receive benefits, producers must meet other specific eli-

gibility requirements.

Farmers, ranchers and growers can apply for the following new programs now at local FSA offices and USDA Service Centers:

2005 Hurricanes Livestock Compensation Program provides payments to livestock owners and cash lessees for certain feed losses.

2005 Hurricanes Livestock Indemnity Program II provides benefits to livestock owners and contract growers for certain livestock deaths.

2005 Hurricanes Citrus Program provides benefits to citrus producers who suffered citrus crop production losses and associated fruit-bearing tree damage, including related clean-up and rehabilitation costs.

2005 Hurricanes Fruit and Vegetable Program provides benefits to producers who suffered fruit and vegetable crop production losses, including related clean-up costs.

2005 Hurricanes Tropical Fruit Program provides benefits to producers of carambola, longan, lychee and mangos who suffered tropical fruit production losses.

2005 Hurricanes Nursery Program provides benefits to commercial ornamental nursery and fernery producers who suffered

inventory losses and incurred clean-up costs.

The other two disaster programs are the 2005 Hurricanes Tree Assistance Program (TAP) and the 2005 Catfish Grant Program.

TAP will provide payments to eligible owners of commercially grown Christmas trees, ornamental trees, nursery trees, potted trees, bushes (including shrubs) and vines that were lost or damaged due to 2005 hurricanes. USDA expects to announce the TAP sign-up period in the near future.

Under the catfish program, grants will be provided to states having catfish producers who suffered feed losses. USDA will not administer the grant program. Governors or their designees will announce sign-up dates and application procedures for the catfish feed loss program and distribute program payments.

USDA understands that some producers may have little documentation of their losses due to hurricane devastation; however, producers will be required to provide all available documentation. Producers may not receive payments made under other federal programs for the same losses.

## April 2 is deadline to apply for gasoline tax refund

**MONTGOMERY** — April 2 is the deadline for Alabama farmers to file their state gasoline tax refund claims with the Alabama Department of Revenue, according to State Commissioner of Revenue Tom Surtees.

"This year farmers are given a few extra days to file their refund claims. Since the actual deadline date, March 31, falls on a Saturday, the refund filing deadline moves to the next business day which is April 2," explained Surtees.

"The refund claims are based on portions of the state excise tax paid by farmers on gasoline used during 2006 for agricultural purposes. The portion of the gasoline tax that can be refunded applies only to the amount of gasoline that is used in tractors or any auxiliary engines which may be attached to tractors. Gasoline used in farm trucks

is not subject to a refund. We encourage those farmers who qualify for such a refund to submit their refund claims as soon as possible. The refund claim must be postmarked no later than April 2, 2007," Surtees said.

Taxes on gasoline purchased from Jan. 1, 2006, through Dec. 31, 2006, will be refunded at the rate of 15 cents per gallon. The refund applies to the tax levied upon gasoline only; it does not apply to any tax levied upon diesel fuel.

Any individual qualifying for a refund who has not received a 2006 claim form may obtain one by writing to the following address: Alabama Department of Revenue, Sales, Use and Business Tax Division, Motor Fuels Section, Post Office Box 327540, Montgomery, AL 36132-7540, or telephone (334) 242-9608.

## Forest taxation seminar planned

By John P. Ollison  
Regional Extension Agent

**BUTLER** — Blackbelt Area Landowners should be advised of a "Forest Taxation" seminar planned for Tuesday, January 23rd, at 6 p.m. at the Lower Coastal Plain Substation.

The speaker will be Lou Hyman with the Alabama Forestry Commission. Mr. Hyman is the Assis-

stant Director of the AFC's Fire Division and Forest Taxation Specialist in Montgomery.

Topics Mr. Hyman will discuss include: Record Keeping; Timber Management; Tax Incentives; and updates on tax changes that are more advantageous for forest landowners.

Prior to joining the AFC, Mr. Hyman was employed as a Tax Specialist with a private consulting

firm. Since joining the AFC he has held titles of Tax Specialist and Forest Economics Specialist. He holds a Masters' Degree from Duke University in Forest Economics and his impressive background makes him uniquely qualified to speak on forest taxation.

There is no cost to attend but you will need to call the Wilcox County Extension office at 334-682-4289 to register.

## Loans available to help socially disadvantaged persons buy farms

**JACKSON** — The Alabama State Farm Service Agency announced that funds are available, under the Farm Loan Program, for fiscal year 2007, for members of socially disadvantaged groups who want to purchase or operate a family farm.

Wyatt Hendry said that in fiscal year 2006, which ended Sept. 30, Alabama made 131 SDA loans totaling nearly \$11 million. This was 36 percent of the total loans made and 26 percent of the total dollars loaned. Twenty-five of the 131 loans are guaranteed loans. FSA guarantees loans made by conventional agricultural lenders for up to 95 percent of any loss.

"This special financing is for people who are part of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of the group without regard to their individual qualities. SDA members include women, African Americans, American Indians, Hispanics, Asians, Pacific Islanders and Alaskan Natives," said Danny F. Crawford, Alabama FSA State Executive Director.

Farm operating loans may be used to purchase livestock, equipment, feed, seed, and other business

related expenses. Repayment terms run from one to seven years.

Farm ownership loans provide capital to purchase or enlarge a farm, construct or improve buildings, promote soil and water conservation and pay closing costs. Direct farm ownership loan terms are up to 40 years.

Guaranteed farm ownership loan terms are established by the lender. Qualified candidates are provided information and assistance to develop sound management practices, analyze problems and utilize available resources essential for successful farming operations to cope with the changing agricultural environment.

SDA loan applicants must be U.S. citizens with a satisfactory history of meeting credit obligations; have sufficient education, training or experience managing or operating a farm; possess the legal capacity to incur debt; and be unable to obtain credit elsewhere.

For more information on the Farm Loan Program, readers may contact the Clarke/Washington Farm Service Agency at 3100 Hwy. 43, Jackson, AL 36545, or by calling 251-246-9575.

## Applications sought for Conservation Innovation Grants

**LINDEN** — The Alabama Natural Resources Conservation Service requests applications from eligible government, non-government organizations, or individuals for 2007 Conservation Innovation Grants.

The purpose of CIG grants is to stimulate development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies in the state. Two categories are available for 2007: Natural Resource Concerns and Technology. Proposal deadline is March 1, 2007. Applications received after that date will not be considered for funding. Applications can be submitted using express mail or overnight courier service, or hand delivered to:

**USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service**  
3381 Skyway Drive  
Auburn, AL 36830  
Applications sent via the U.S. Mail must be sent to:

**USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service**  
P.O. Box 311  
Auburn, AL 36831

CIG enables NRCS to work with other public and private entities to accelerate technology transfer and adoption of promising technologies and approaches to address some of the Alabama's most pressing natural resource concerns. CIG will benefit agricultural producers by providing more options for environmental enhancement and compliance with Federal, State, and local regulations. The CIG requires a 50-50 match between the agency and the applicant. Up to half of the applicant's matching funds (up to 25 percent of the total project cost) may be from in-kind contributions. Individual State grants will not exceed \$75,000.

Funds will be awarded through a competitive grant process. Awards are anticipated to be made by June 15, 2007, with agreements to awardees by August 1, 2007.

More detailed information will be available on-line at: <http://www.nrcs.gov/programs/cig/> or from your local NRCS office at 105 E 5TH Ave., Linden Ala. 36748; or by calling (334) 295-8724 ext. 3.



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