**Farm Service Agency**

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Release No.

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**FSA County Committee Elections to Begin; Producers to Receive Ballots Week of Nov. 9**

*Farmers and Ranchers Have a Voice in Local Farm Program Decisions*

WASHINGTON, Nov. 5, 2015 – Farm Service Agency (FSA) Administrator Val Dolcini today announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will begin mailing ballots to eligible farmers and ranchers across the country for the 2015 FSA County Committee elections on Monday, Nov. 9, 2015. Producers must return ballots to their local FSA offices by Dec. 7, 2015, to ensure that their vote is counted.

“County committee members represent the farmers and ranchers in their communities,” said Dolcini. “Producers elected to these committees have always played a vital role in local agricultural decisions. They are essential to the daily operation of nearly 2,200 offices across the country. It is a valued partnership that helps us better understand the needs of the farmers and ranchers we serve.”

Nearly 7,700 FSA County Committee members serve FSA offices nationwide. Each committee has three to 11 elected members who serve three-year terms of office. One-third of county committee seats are up for election each year. County committee members apply their knowledge and judgment to help FSA make important decisions on its commodity support programs; conservation programs; indemnity and disaster programs; emergency programs and eligibility.

Producers must participate or cooperate in an FSA program to be eligible to vote in the county committee election. Approximately 1.9 million producers are currently eligible to vote. Farmers and ranchers who supervise and conduct the farming operations of an entire farm, but are not of legal voting age, also may be eligible to vote.

Farmers and ranchers will begin receiving their ballots the week of Nov. 9. Ballots include the names of candidates running for the local committee election. FSA has modified the ballot, making it more easily identifiable and less likely to be overlooked. Voters who do not receive ballots in the coming week can pick one up at their local FSA office. Ballots returned by mail must be postmarked no later than Dec. 7, 2015. Newly elected committee members and their alternates will take office Jan. 1, 2016.

For more information, visit the FSA website at [www.fsa.usda.gov/elections](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/elections). You may also contact your local USDA Service Center or FSA office. Visit <http://offices.usda.gov> to find an FSA office near you.

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