

FSA “RECEIPT FOR SERVICE” REQUIRED

Receipt for Service Can Be Important

Farmers involved in difficulties or disputes with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) about past program activities have sometimes felt that their FSA files did not reflect what the farmers recall happening when they interacted with FSA staff.

In response to concerns repeatedly expressed by farmers and farm organizations about these documentation problems, Congress included in both the 2008 Farm Bill and the 2014 Farm Bill provisions for a “receipt for service” for farmers who interact with FSA, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Rural Development (RD).

Receipt Should Be Automatic

As a result of the 2014 Farm Bill, FSA is automatically required to provide farmers with a receipt for service. Beginning in 2008, the farmer could get a receipt if the farmer requested it. Now the receipt must be provided whether the farmer asks for it or not. The receipt, according to federal statute, must be given to any “agricultural producer or landowner” that requests a service from FSA.

Receipt Must Include Date and Summary of Agency Action

The 2014 Farm Bill says that the receipt must include several things.

First, it must include the date and place of the farmer’s request to FSA.

Second, the receipt must include the “subject of the request” made by the farmer. For example, if the farmer asked for an Operating Loan, the receipt must explain that the farmer requested an Operating Loan.

Third, the receipt must explain how FSA responded to the farmer’s request for a benefit or service. The statute says that FSA must explain in the receipt the “action taken” or “not taken” by FSA, or the “recommendation” that was made to the farmer.

USDA Implementation

It does not appear that FSA has changed its internal handbook to reflect the 2014 Farm Bill regarding a receipt for service. As a result, the on-line version of the receipt for service form to be used by USDA still says the receipt is available “if requested.”

In fact, a receipt for service for all producers – whether they ask for it or not – is now required by law.