Dan Steinkruger State Executive Director for the Nebraska Farm Service Agency (FSA) recently announced that farmer and rancher candidate nominations are currently being accepted for the local FSA county committees(COCs). The nomination period closes Wednesday, Aug. 1, with the election taking place between Friday, November 5, and the close of business on Monday, Dec. 3.

"I encourage all farmers, ranchers, and landowners to participate in the COC election process by nominating candidates by the Aug. 1 deadline," said Steinkruger. "We would like as much participation as possible since COCs provide a vital link to have opinions and ideas heard at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. With better participation in recent years, we also have seen a trend of increased nominations of minority and women producers that we hope will continue."

To be eligible to serve on a FSA COC a person must participate or cooperate in a program administered by FSA, be eligible to vote in a COC election and reside in the local administrative area in which the person is a candidate.

Producers may nominate themselves or others and organizations representing minorities and women also may nominate candidates. To become a candidate, an eligible individual must sign the nomination form FSA-669A.

The form and other information about FSA COC elections are available online at: http://www.fsa.usda.gov/elections or you may visit any local FSA office to obtain a copy. Nomination forms for the 2012 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by close of business Aug. 1.

FSA COC members make decisions on disaster and conservation programs, emergency programs, commodity price support loan programs and other important agricultural issues.

Committee members are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA. They help deliver FSA farm programs at the local level. Farmers who serve on committees help decide the kind of programs their counties will offer. They work to make FSA agricultural programs serve the needs of local producers.

Members serve three-year terms. In Nebraska, committees consist of three to 7 members who are elected by eligible producers. Steinkruger added, "It is important that farmers nominate the neighboring producers they want to represent them on FSA COCs.