National Association of FSA County Office Employees

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On behalf of the National Association of Farm Service Agency County Office Employees (NASCOE), we write today regarding the U.S. Department of Agriculture's reorganization plan as outlined in the Secretary's memorandum issued on July 24, 2025. Since 1962, NASCOE has enjoyed exclusive recognition to represent full-time county office employees. Today, we represent nearly 7,000 Farm Service Agency (FSA) employees who work across the country delivering farm and conservation programs. We are the customer facing employees who work to ensure America's farmers and ranchers have access to FSA's programs.

We write today to urge the Department of Agriculture to consider two items of concern to NASCOE. The first is adequate staffing in county offices nationwide. For many years, FSA's Optimally Productive Office (OPO) staffing model has guided state leadership in identifying where hiring actions are most needed. However, the loss of many employees in recent years—particularly following DRP—has placed increasing strain on the system. FSA employees not only ensure farmers and ranchers have access to USDA programs but also carry the responsibility of delivering those programs accurately, efficiently, and in accordance with Congressional and Departmental direction.

Currently, many county offices are being forced to reduce office hours, adjust schedules, or shift staff across locations just to meet basic customer service needs. While we acknowledge the important and timely work accomplished in delivering ECAP, ELRP, and SDRP payments, this rapid deployment has often come at the expense of routine programs, applications, and processes that producers also depend upon.

We are concerned by the suggestion that staffing levels are adequate simply because payments have been delivered quickly. NASCOE respectfully disagrees. Rapid payment delivery does not reflect the full scope of FSA's workload, nor does it capture the growing backlog and strain on remaining staff. Without staffing levels more consistent with OPO guidance, we risk further losses in personnel, greater challenges in recruitment and training, and ultimately longer delays in serving farmers and ranchers in the timely manner they deserve and Congress expects.

While we appreciate that the current Reorganization Plan does not directly impact County Offices, the continued erosion of staffing capacity poses a very real threat to FSA's ability to meet its mission. We strongly urge USDA to prioritize restoring and maintaining adequate staffing across all county offices.

The second item is that we retain the current County Committee (COC) system. County committees, authorized by Congress in the 1930's, allow for grassroots input and local administration of "Agricultural Adjustment Administration" programs. As FSA has noted, county committees make determinations on programs such as disaster assistance, hiring decisions, and assist with public outreach. COC members also ensure the fair and equitable administration of FSA farm programs in their counties and are accountable to the Secretary of Agriculture.

These committees serve as the critical link between farmers, ranchers, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, ensuring that local voices are heard in the administration of farm programs. County committees bring together producers who understand firsthand the unique challenges and opportunities of their region. Their input helps guide decisions on conservation initiatives, disaster assistance, and safety-net programs, ensuring that federal policies reflect the realities on the ground. This grassroots decision-making process promotes fairness, accountability, and accessibility for farmers of all sizes and backgrounds.

The strength of FSA county offices and the County Committee (COC) system lie in its people. Our dedicated staff often represent diverse sectors of agriculture and are recognized as leaders within their communities. County Committee members are local producers, elected by their peers to serve as trusted representatives.

Together, this local leadership not only empowers producers but also builds confidence in the programs that support rural America. COCs play a vital role in maintaining program integrity and take great pride in hiring the managers who lead their local FSA offices. At a time when agriculture faces growing economic challenges, the role of County Committees is more critical than ever. They help producers navigate uncertainty and ensure access to the resources and support needed to thrive.

It is important to note that the Trump Administration has proposed shifting Washington, DC based employees into regional hubs. We believe county committees provide locally based input the Department of Agriculture is seeking through agency reorganization.

I urge you to continue supporting and strengthening FSA through both adequate staffing and our county committees. The current system should remain the cornerstone of American agriculture, giving farmers and ranchers a direct voice in shaping the programs that affect their livelihoods.

Thank you for considering the views of NASCOE and our county office employees.

Sincerely,

Kayla L Mattson

NASCOE President