

This handbook has been designed for the purpose of informing all county FDP workers about the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS), its committee system, the functions of the committees, and how the members of the committees are selected.

NAMES OF THE COMMITTEES

There are three different kinds of ASCS committees:

1. the ASCS State Committee
2. the ASCS County Committee
3. the ASCS Local or Community Committee

COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEES

State-Committee: includes three members appointed by the secretary of Agriculture. In addition, the Director of the Agricultural Extension Service is an ex-officio member of the committee, that is, he sits on the committee but he does not have voting privileges.

County-Committee: includes three members called, chairman, vice-chairman and regular member, and also, two alternates called, first alternate and second alternate.

Community-Committee: includes three members called, chairman, vice-chairman, and regular member and two alternates called, first and second alternate.

FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMITTEES:

State Committee:

1. Cotton Allotment: Each year the United States has a marketing quota for cotton. The Secretary of Agriculture determines and proclaims a national acreage allotment for the cotton crop to be produced in the next calendar year.

The national acreage allotment is then apportioned to the several states. Thus, it follows that each state then has an acreage allotment for cotton.

When a state gets its acreage allotment, the state ASCS committee apportions its acreage allotment to the counties that make up that state.

2. Supervisory Role: the State ASCS committee supervises the county and community committees.

County Committee:

1. Cotton Acreage Allotment on the Individual Level:

When the county receives its acreage allotment, the county committee then apportions it to the farms that grow cotton in that county.

Thus, the Holmes County ASCS Committee determines the size of the individual farm acreage allotments each year for the farmers of Holmes County.

In general, each farmer's allotment is determined by his 1958 cotton allotment. The amount of cotton acres a farmer received in 1958 is referred to as his cotton base and his allotment in years to come is determined by this amount. These cotton acres are also referred to as his history acres. Thus, if, in 1958 a farmer received ten cotton acres, he should receive ten cotton acres in 1966.

There are, however, several ways in which a Farmer's cotton allotment can be changed:

1. If a farmer did not plant at least 75% of his history acres, his allotment in the following year will be decreased.
2. Each county ASCS Committee is legally allowed to withhold 15% of a farmer's total acreage allotment each year. This may be done by taking a part of each man's allotment away. It is usually done in order to provide for hardship cases or for use in creating new cotton farms. It is also possible however, to withhold 15% of one's yearly allotment and to use it to adjust the acreage allotments for old cotton farms during the next year.
3. In the event that a farmer gives up a part of his allotment, or is asked by the ASCS to give up a part of his allotment or is asked by the ASCS to give up a part of his allotment because of his failure to plant more than 75% of his total allotment, the extra acreage is given to the ASCS County Committee and these released allotments may be reapportioned. The ASCS county committee sets up the Release and Reapportionment Committee to deal with this type of occurrence. If a farmer gives up twenty acres of his allotment, the Release and Reapportionment Committee can give it to other farmers on the basis of written requests from the farm operators.

Other things that the County Committee does in regard to cotton acreage allotment are:

- a) it established what each farm's normal yield is
- b) it handles complaints from the cotton farmers about their allotments: all farmers receive notice of the allotments by December 15. Each farmer is allowed 15 days from the day he receives his notice to appeal his allotment if he is dissatisfied. An appeal should be made in writing to the ASCS County Office in Lexington. His case will be reviewed by a Review Committee. If a farmer is still dissatisfied with the decision handed down by the review committee he may appeal to the proper Federal District or State Court for a review of his case.
- c) it supervises the referendums on marketing quotas; the referendum is where all cotton farmers vote to decide if there will be marketing quotas in the coming year. All farmers who planted cotton in 1965 are eligible to vote in the 1965 referendum.
- d) it determines penalties for failure to abide by the rules, for example, for those who plant more cotton than they were told to plant. The ASCS County Committee will charge a certain amount to have it plowed.

CONSERVATION

Congress has also authorized an elaborate but complex conservation program. It involves a cost sharing program which can be initiated by individual farmers. If a farmer in Holmes County makes a request from the Department of Agriculture for funds to start on a cost sharing program for purposes of conserving a part of his soil, it is the ASCS County Committee that reviews this request. In this way, the ASCS committee also recommends changes in the State and National Conservation programs.

OTHER FUNCTIONS: The committee has other functions relating to:

1. the price support program--the county ASCS committee determines which farmers are eligible for price support. Price support refers to the price that the government will pay farmers for the cotton that they are unable to sell.
2. Each ASCS county committee employs a county office manager who, for the committee, hires the necessary employees for office and field work and sees that the day-to-day office operations are effectively and efficiently performed.

There are other responsibilities that the ASCS county committee has in Holmes County, but because Holmes County is almost entirely a cotton growing County, its main functions relate to cotton and cotton allotments.

COMMUNITY COMMITTEE:

1. gives assistance to the county committee in carrying out the ASCS programs.
2. Informs farmers about ASC programs being administered in the county.

SELECTION OF THE ASCS COUNTY COMMITTEE:

In December of this year, a new county committee will be selected for Holmes County. The specific date in December when the committee will be selected is not known at this time. The specific date, however, can be obtained by going to the local ASCS office in Lexington and requesting an Election Calendar.

Before the selection of the committee is made, there are some important activities that directly involve the people of Holmes County. First, the community committees must be elected. Let's consider this.

For purposes of ASCS elections, Holmes County is divided into nine ASCS communities, with each community having from 150-300 farm families. These communities are:

- A. Acona
- B. West
- C. Coxburg
- D. Durant
- E. Ebenezer
- F. Goodman-Pickens
- G. North Lexington
- H. South Lexington
- I. Delta

A farmer knows what community he belongs to from his farm number. A farmer's farm number is indicated next to his name on his 1965 Cotton Allotment Notice. The number may be read, for example, "300A". The letter "A" in this number tells the farmers that he is a member of the Acona ASC community and will vote in Acona in the next election. Each capital letter in the list above is the code letter for that community.

In Holmes County, between now and December 3, there will be an election in each of these communities. In order to get the date of the election one has to go to the ASCS office in Lexington. This date will also be indicated on the above mentioned Election Calendar.

At the election, each community will elect its community ASCS committee. As mentioned before, the community committee consists of three people, a chairman, a vice chairman, and a member. There are also two alternates in case any of the regular members becomes incapacitated for any reason.

NOMINATING AND ELECTING PROCEDURE FOR THE COMMUNITY ASCS COMMITTEES:

NOMINATING

During late October, November 3, at the latest, farmers are to be notified that nominations are open. Any six eligible voters in one community can petition to nominate another eligible voter for that community's ASCS committee.

ELIGIBILITY

Every farmer in the community who has an interest in a farm as an owner or part owner, tenant or sharecropper and is eligible to participate in any of the programs administered by the county committee is eligible to vote. If a person is under 21 but is fully running a farm, he is eligible to vote.

NOTIFICATION

A notice of all portions of the program is to be sent out by mail, to all eligible farmers. There should also be a notice in the newspaper (but this is not a requirement, as there are no funds for buying newspaper space and therefore the space has to be a voluntary contribution on the part of the newspaper), or a notice in a public place, for example, the ASCS office.

MAILING LIST

The mailing list is made up on the basis of participation in the programs of the ASCS. All farms have to be visited to check with compliance with allotment programs. At this time names and addresses of residents are to be taken and put on the list. There may be some missed due to moving during the year, but this should be a small number. A plantation owner is required to report the names of all of his tenants, failure to do so is illegal.

NOMINATING FORM

If the farmers decide to nominate someone they must draw up a petition for example:

"We the undersigned electors of X community, nominate John Smith for community committeeman of X community."

Six people at least must sign the petition. Remember all six people must be from the same ASCS community, for example, all six people must be from the "A" or Acona community if they are nominating someone from the Acona community. Since there is always the possibility of disqualification, it is better to have more than six people sign each petition.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR BEING NOMINATED

1. Nominee must live in the county and community he is being elected from.
2. He must be eligible to vote in the elections.
3. He must not have been dishonourably discharged from the army or been removed from office for a dishonourable reason. He must also not have been convicted of fraud, larceny, embezzlement, or felony. The State ASCS Committee or the Deputy Administrator (Mr. Daniels) can waive this and allow anyone to run.

If there is someone seriously considering running for office, he should take a look at sections 7.15 and 7.27 of the Law (title 7) a copy of which can be found in the FDP office in Lexington.

RETURN OF PETITIONS

Nominating petitions must be returned by mid-November to the ASCS office in Lexington. Check the Election Calendar for the exact date.

WARNING

You may be told that the county committee makes up the list of nominees, THIS IS NOT CORRECT. The county committee can nominate, but all people nominated by a six man petition, provided all requirements are met, must be on the ballot.

ELECTING

BALLOT

The ballot is to be mailed out by November 23 at the latest. It is to go to all farmers on the mailing list. The ballot contains the names of all farmers nominated, plus five blank spaces.

ELECTION

The election in Holmes County is usually by polling place. It may be by mail though.

ELECTION BY MAIL: The ballots are sent out to all farmers by November 23. The farmer marks the ballot one to five times, seals it in a plain envelope. Note: A farmer who votes can vote for five people. If there are not five people on the ballot who the farmer desires to vote for he may write in the names of people he prefers. He should not however, vote for more than five people all together. After each farmer seals the plain envelope, he must put it in an addressed envelope and mail it to the ASCS Office Manager in Lexington by December 3 at the latest. The date the ballots are due is sent out with the ballots. The office manager opens the addressed envelopes as they come in and places the unopened blank envelopes in a standardized ballot box. On the announced date, he opens them in public. The ballots are counted and the results are announced.

ELECTION BY POLLING PLACE: The polling place will be announced well in advance of the election. Each community will have a location. In Holmes County, if a farmer belongs to community "A" he will most likely be told to vote in Acona, if he belongs to community "B", he will be told to vote in West, and so on. On December 3, at the latest the polling will be held. A member of the community committee and an assistant he selects are supposed to monitor the elections. They count the ballots, certify the results, and deliver them to the Office Manager, who announces the results.

RANK

From this election the person receiving the most votes is the chairman. The person with the second largest number of votes is vice chairman. The person with the third largest number of votes is member, and the first and second alternates rank fourth and fifth in the number of votes received.

That is how the community committee is elected.

HOW THE COUNTY COMMITTEE IS SELECTED
COUNTY CONVENTION

After the election of the community committeemen there will be what is called a county convention. It is at this convention that the Holmes County ASCS Committee will be selected. There will be nine people who do the selecting at the convention. Those nine people will be the chairmen of the community committees that were just elected in A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, and I communities. These nine men will decide who will sit on the Holmes County ASCS committee.

ELIGIBILITY FOR COUNTY COMMITTEEMEN

1. All members have to be residents of the county and eligible to vote in that county.
2. A person who has been dishonourably discharged from the armed forces, has been convicted of fraud, larceny, embezzlement, or felony, or has been removed from public office dishonourably cannot hold office, unless the state committee or Deputy Administrator waives this, as with the community committee.
3. If a person who is on the community committee is selected, that person has to quit the community committee. One person cannot hold more than one office.

RANK

Five people will be selected for the County Committee. The person receiving the most votes is the chairman; the person with the second largest number of votes is vice chairman; the person with the third largest number of votes is a regular member; the fourth, first alternate; the fifth becomes second alternate.

I should be noted that this years (1965) selection of County Committeemen will be particularly important. Three men will be elected, one for one year, one for two years, and one for three years. Starting in 1966 county committeemen will be elected for three year terms and only one will be selected each year.

A summary of the election procedure appears in the next page.

COUNTY ASCS COMMITTEE



WHICH ELECTS



COUNTY CONVENTION OF
THE 9 ASCS BEAT CHAIRMEN



EACH BEAT COMMITTEE SENDS
CHAIRMEN TO



CHAIRMEN, VICE-CHAIRMEN,
MEMBER and 1ST, 2ND ALTERNATE
Community ASCS Committee



ELECT

FARM OWNERS, PART-OWNERS,
TENANTS, SHARECROPPERS
farmers in each community

↑ START ↑

FACTS ABOUT BOTH ASC COUNTY AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEES SUCCESSION PROCEDURE

If a person quits a committee, or cannot attend a meeting, everyone moves up one space to fill his place. For example, if the vice chairman of the community committee is elected to the county committee, the member of the community committee becomes vice chairman, the first alternate becomes member, and the second alternate becomes first alternate.

ASSUMPTION OF DUTIES

The new committees assume duties January 1. The county extension agent is an ex-officio member; that is, he cannot vote, but sits at all meetings. The ASC office manager also sits in the meetings but cannot vote. The voting members are the chairman, the vice-chairman, and the member.

PAY

The committeemen, both county and community, are paid \$12.00 for a fully day (more than four hours) and \$6.00 for a half day (less than four hours). The office manager is hired at \$6,000 or so a year on civil service scale. As mentioned before, he is hired by the county committee, but he cannot be fired unless there is a major complaint against him.

ORIENTATION

The community committeemen are given a half day orientation before assuming duties.

The county committeemen are given a full day orientation.

MEETING

The community committeemen should meet three times a year. They are not required to meet at all.

The county committeemen must meet at least once a month. Regular sessions are open to farmers who have a direct concern in attending, that is, if the meeting in some way will concern their farm. There are occasional executive sessions which are closed. These sessions are to deal with matters which are legally confidential.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY

1. Go to ASC office, that is, ask some farmers to go and get the following information which will be helpful in getting Negroes elected:
 - a. a list of all eligible voters (at least find out if and where such a list can be obtained). Remember there are such lists.
 - b. get a map indicating the community boundaries in the county.
 - c. find out how the county committee insures that tenants and sharecroppers get ballots.
 - d. a member of the community committee and an assistant that he selects are supposed to monitor the elections, find out how the member of the committee is chosen and if Federal Aid can be obtained to check the counting of the ballots.
2. Go to ASC office and get some specific information about the programs, for example,
 - a. find out in more detail about programs the farmers are entitled to because of their participation in Federally Assisted Programs, e.g., telephone privileges
 - b. find out if farmers are entitled to purchase fertilizer and other materials through the ASC Office.
3. If there is any lack of cooperation in getting information or harrassment in nominating, voting, etc. write a letter to:
 - a. Mr. Daniels, Deputy Administrator
Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service
State Office, Milner Building
Jackson, Mississippi
 - b. Orville L. Freeman, Secretary of Agriculture
11th Street and Independence Ave. SW
Washington 25, D.C.
 - c. the person you are complaining about
 - d. Horace J. Godfrey, Administrator ASCS
11th Street Independence Ave. SW
Washington 25, D.C.
4. Other points that aren't clear
 - a. the ASCS Committeemen fact book says that no history credit goes to the farm receiving reapportioned acreage.. This seems to me that if a farmer gets two extra acres one year, there is no guarantee that he will get them the next year. Try to find out if a farmer's history credit can ever change; if so when, under what circumstances, etc...
5. Have FDP members at each polling place on election day to help prevent intimidation of local farmers. Record and collect any incident or complaint of harrassment.