



**News Release  
Office of the United States Attorney**

**District of South Dakota**

**Michell G. Tapken  
United States Attorney**

---

515 Ninth Street #201 • Rapid City, SD 57701 • 605/342-7822

---

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT:   MICHELLE G. TAPKEN**  
United States Attorney  
605/342-7822

Monday  
December 12, 2005

United States Attorney Michelle G. Tapken announced today that David and Connie Finneman, of Rapid City, were sentenced by U.S. District Judge Richard H. Battey to 37 months federal imprisonment to be followed by three years of post incarceration supervision by the United States Department of Probation. The Finnemans were originally indicted by a federal grand jury in 2004 in connection with a scheme they devised to enable them to unlawfully obtain United States Department of Agriculture benefits.

As farmers the Finnemans were entitled to a certain amount of federal agriculture benefits for land they were farming. Under the benefit program, only those farmers who exercise management over the land and provide capital, land, equipment, and labor, receive federal farm benefits. Persons merely working as laborers are not entitled to these benefits.

When they reached the upper annual limit of benefits they conspired to set up "sham" or phony farming operations using two of their relatives and their young son. The Finnemans convinced the local Farm Service Agency Office that these three men were also full-time farmers entitled to federal benefits. In reality, the two relatives only occasionally worked on the Finnemans' farmland but, otherwise, maintained full-time jobs in other states. The Finnemans' son strictly worked on the farm and did not provide management, capital, or equipment and was thus not entitled to benefit payments. Most of the benefit checks sent to the relatives and the Finnemans' son were then transferred by Connie Finneman directly into the Finnemans' bank account.

After an internal audit in 2000, it was determined the Finnemans had defrauded the government of well over one million dollars. They pleaded guilty to federal conspiracy charges in September of this year. They will begin service of their federal jail terms in January. The case was investigated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Office of Inspector General Special Agent Jim Merrick and the Risk Management Agency's Regional Investigator J.R. Soske. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Gregg S. Peterman.