MANAGERS BULLETIN: MGR–20-030

DATE December 23, 2020

TO: All Approved Insurance Providers
    All Risk Management Agency Field Offices
    All Other Interested Parties

FROM: Martin R. Barbre, Administrator /s/ Keith Gray 12/23/2020

SUBJECT: Extending COVID-19 Relief

Background

In March 2020, the Risk Management Agency (RMA) began issuing Manager’s Bulletins to provide program flexibilities in response to COVID-19. These RMA-issued COVID-19 flexibilities can be found on the web at www.rma.usda.gov/News-Room/Continuing-Interest/Coronavirus-Resources. Recognizing that the delivery system continues to face challenges due to COVID-19, RMA remains committed to providing flexibility that supports the health and safety of all parties while also ensuring the Federal crop insurance program continues to serve as a vital risk management tool.

Action

This action supplements the earlier relief authorized by Manager’s Bulletins: MGR 20-005, MGR 20-008, MGR 20-009, MGR 20-010, MGR 20-013, and MGR 20-026.

Electronic Notification and Signature Relief for Sales Closing (SCD) Production Reporting (PRD) and Acreage Reporting (ARD) Deadlines:

Relief under Manager’s Bulletin MGR 20-026 is extended through July 15, 2021, for all applicable crop years, authorizing notifications to be sent electronically between the policyholder and their Approved Insurance Provider (AIP)/agent. Policyholders may provide information over the phone, retaining appropriate documentation of the call or by using electronic methods to select policy elections by the SCD, and to report policy related information by the PRD and ARD. This authority also extends to options, endorsements, and other forms with SCD, PRD, or ARD deadlines.

If the policyholder sends their reports in such a manner, they will be required to either sign digitally at the time of their report submission or follow up with a properly signed form(s) no later than 60 calendar days after the initial reporting deadline provided in the actuarial documents. The policyholder agrees to be bound by their initial certification and cannot make changes, other than those authorized by RMA procedure, after the applicable deadline.

Temporary Yields for Policyholders Directly Impacted by COVID-19:

For crop policies, in any applicable crop year, with an SCD between December 15, 2020 through March 15, 2021, AIPs are authorized to use the temporary yield procedure contained in the Crop Insurance Handbook (CIH) when a policyholder is unable to timely provide a production report due to their physical inability to meet the PRD deadline as a result of being directly impacted by COVID-19. The policyholder may report this impact electronically to their AIP who will document the use of the temporary yield. AIPs should use the temporary yield only in very limited situations, not as an alternative to PRD electronic reporting methods authorized in this bulletin. Additionally, a temporary yield must be replaced by an actual yield in the subsequent crop year and if a policyholder uses this exception to avoid reporting actual production history, assigned yields may apply.

Producer Submission Deadlines for Written Agreement Requests:

In accordance with Section 18(e)(1) of the Common Crop Insurance Policy, Basic Provisions, AIPs are reminded that producers may be able to submit a request for a written agreement after the SCD, but on or before the ARD, if they are able to demonstrate the physical inability, including self-certification of COVID-19 related issues, to submit the request (or required additional documentation) on or before the SCD.

AIP Submission Deadlines for Written Agreement Requests:

In accordance with paragraph 23 A (2) and (3) of the 2021 Written Agreement Handbook (WAH), RMA is granting AIPs additional time to submit written agreement requests and applicable documentation into the RMA Regional Office Exception (ROE) system. Only written agreement requests that have a submission deadline prior to July 1, 2021 (such as the Cancellation Date, SCD, ARD, or other deadline identified in the WAH) are receiving additional time. For these requests, AIPs have until 30 business days after the applicable producer submission deadline to submit the Request for Actuarial Change form and all applicable documentation into the RMA ROE system. The additional time applies to all written agreement types identified in the WAH.

Producer Signature Deadline for Written Agreement Offers:

If a written agreement offer is provided to the producer, but the producer fails to sign the offer by the expiration date identified on the offer, the producer’s signature after the expiration date may still be accepted. If the signature and date are executed after the expiration date of the written agreement offer, the producer must provide a self-certification, or other documentation, showing that COVID-19 caused a physical inability to sign the offer by the expiration date. This self-certification, or other documentation, must include a brief explanation of the circumstances surrounding the situation (such as, producer was quarantined, etc.) and must be included with the signed and accepted written agreement offer when returned to RMA.

Only written agreement offers issued by RMA on or before June 30, 2021, with an expiration date on or before July 30, 2021, allow producer signatures to be accepted after the expiration date with proper self-certification or documentation. All documentation and signatures for these offers must be completed no later than August 2, 2021. In lieu of paragraphs 54 and 56 of the 2021 WAH, written agreement offers signed after the expiration date due to COVID-19 must be electronically submitted to RMA through the ROE system no later than 15 business days after the producer signed the written agreement offer.

Any written agreement offers with an expiration date after July 30, 2021, must be signed by the expiration date identified in the written agreement offer and follow the procedures provided in the 2021 WAH for submission to RMA. If a written agreement offer is issued requiring a crop inspection per paragraph 42 of the 2021 WAH, the crop inspection is subject to the same dates required for the written agreement offer, unless RMA specifies otherwise in the written agreement offer.

AIP Submission Deadlines for Category B Determined Yield and Master Yield Requests:

For Reinsurance Year (RY) 2021, AIPs are allowed additional time to accept Regional Office (RO) Determined Yield, Master Yield, and Irrigated Determined Yield requests for Category B (annual) crops with a PRD within RY 2021. The completed requests can be accepted by the AIP by the earlier of the ARD or applicable deadline plus 30 calendar days. Requests required to be submitted to RMA for review must be submitted to the RO no later than the earlier of the ARD or applicable
For the 2021 calendar year, AIPs are authorized to count dumped milk towards the milk marketings (for DRP) or actual marketings (for LGM-Dairy) regardless of whether the milk was sold. Producers will still have to provide supporting documentation to the AIP from the cooperative or milk handler verifying the actual pounds dumped and that the milk dumped. This change will provide consistency among all dairy producers on how dumped milk is handled under these policies. The amount of eligible indemnity payment is unaffected by this change. Rather, this avoids imposing a penalty that was not intended to apply in cases where a dairy producer had produced a volume of milk that is consistent with the amount of coverage purchased. In addition, RMA is also removing the testing requirements for dumped milk under the DRP program for producers insuring milk under the component pricing option forced to dump milk. AIPs may use the average butter fat and protein levels for dump milk not tested.

**DISPOSAL DATE:**
December 31, 2021