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USDA Farm Programs Help Farmers and Ranchers During 2019 Challenges

News Release |

Washington DC

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WASHINGTON, D.C., Dec. 19, 2019 -- USDA farm programs helped producers weather a tough 2019, marked with prevented planting, delayed harvests, and unjustified foreign retaliatory tariffs. USDA's farm program agencies – the Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Risk Management Agency (RMA), and Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) Business Center – worked to deliver programs to assist farmers and ranchers. Additionally, these agencies made strides to enhance efficiency and effectiveness to improve service to their customers.

“This has been a challenging year for our nation’s producers. I am very proud of all we’ve done to ease some of the financial strain farmers, ranchers, and their families have experienced,” said USDA FPAC Under Secretary Bill Northey. “In 2020, we don’t plan to slow down. We will continue to do our part to meet Secretary Sonny Perdue’s goal of better serving our customers and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of program delivery. I greatly look forward to seeing what we accomplish in 2020.”

Key highlights from 2019 include:

Support for Prevented Planting: Producers reported more than 19.6 million acres as prevented from planting in 2019, in large part because of a wet, cold spring and flooding. RMA paid roughly \$4.26 billion in prevented planting claims related to flooding and excess moisture. USDA agencies also flexed other ways to help impacted producers, from adjusting deadlines to holding special cover crop signups.

Additionally, producers with crop insurance received a total of \$580 million in “top-up” payments. [Learn more.](#)

Disaster Relief: In addition to weather events that prevented producers from planting, other natural disasters took a toll on U.S. agriculture during the year. Through a suite of disaster programs, USDA helped offset losses through more than \$1 billion in funding from the 2018 Farm Bill and other legislation. FSA started implementation of the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus, through which \$3 billion is available to producers who suffered damages from 2018 and 2019 natural disasters. [Learn more.](#)

Trade Relief: For the second year in a row, USDA provided aid to farmers hurt by trade disruptions prompted by unjustified foreign retaliatory tariffs on their products through the Market Facilitation Program (MFP). FSA paid more than \$10.4 billion to farmers in the first two tranches of payments. [Learn more.](#)

Farm Bill Implementation: On December 20, 2018, President Trump signed the 2018 Farm Bill into law, which created new programs and updated existing ones. FSA, NRCS, RMA, and the FPAC Business Center worked diligently to implement the programs, including:

- Launching the new Dairy Margin Coverage Program, holding both the 2019 and 2020 signups. More than 23,000 producers enrolled for coverage for 2019; the 2020 signup closes tomorrow.
- Publishing interim final rules on the Conservation Reserve Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, and Environmental Quality Incentives Program, as well as making minor changes to a number of conservation regulations including the Technical Service Provider provisions, enabling 2020 signups for these key conservation programs. Additionally, NRCS has made great strides to meet the Farm Bill requirement to review and update its 171 conservation practice standards. So far, 58 have been improved, and two new ones have been developed.
- Opening 2019 and 2020 enrollment for the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage programs.
- Outlining program opportunities for producers growing hemp, as directed by the Farm Bill, including Whole-Farm Revenue Protection, which becomes available in crop year 2020.

- [Learn more.](#)

Customer Service and Technology Advances: USDA conducted a nationwide review and expansion of state innovative conservation technology tools. As a result, a new Highly Erodible Land Determination Tool was developed to decrease customer response times. It saves an estimated 2.5 hours per determination and up to 53 staff years per year nationally. The tool creates greater product consistency and assists field office employees by automatically generating customer information letters with the required form and informative map.

Farmers.gov: USDA's newest self-service website has made a number of advances, including:

- Launching the "My Financial Information" feature, enabling producers to login to view loan information, history, and payments.
- Launching the new Farm Loan Discovery Tool, which helps farmers and ranchers find information on the farm loans that may best fit their operations. Farmers who are looking for financing options to operate a farm or buy land can answer a few simple questions about what they are looking to fund and how much money they need to borrow. [Learn more.](#)

Creation of FPAC: In July 2017, USDA created the new FPAC mission area, aligning FSA, NRCS, and RMA, USDA's farmer-facing agencies, under one Under Secretary. In October 2018, USDA stood up the FPAC Business Center, which provides operational support for the three agencies. The Business Center handles a variety of functions, from human resources to financial management, enabling FSA, NRCS, and RMA to focus on serving farmers and ranchers.

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