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USDA Announces New Federal Crop Insurance Corporation Board Members

News Release |

Washington DC

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WASHINGTON, May 17, 2023 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack appointed two new members of the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC) Board of Directors, which oversees the Federal crop insurance program available through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Chris Bardenhagen and Howard James will serve four-year terms beginning this month on the board, which guides USDA’s Risk Management Agency (RMA) on administering crop insurance.

“RMA is committed to serving a broader group of farmers through Federal crop insurance to ensure risk management options are available for farmers of all backgrounds who grow a wide variety of crops. This includes representation on the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation Board of Directors,” said RMA Administrator Marcia Bungler, who serves as the FCIC manager. “We look forward to working with them in managing the Federal crop insurance program to continue our efforts to improve crop insurance to better meet the needs of America’s producers.”

Bardenhagen, a producer representative, is part owner and operator of a sixth generation, 80-acre family farm in Michigan that produces apples and table grapes for local and regional sales, as well as a variety of tree fruit for the farm stand. Bardenhagen has decades of experience as a farm advocate, producer and researcher. His recent interdisciplinary doctorate in agricultural business organization/associations from Michigan State University gives him expertise on regional value chain business development. He has an extensive knowledge of cooperative farming systems, specialty crop marketing and farmer-led decision-

making processes. He is a former board member of the Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance and the East Lansing Food Cooperative and has served as a grant reviewer for the North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program.

“I am excited to have been appointed to the board, and I look forward to serving U.S. farmers,” Bardenhagen said.

James, a producer representative, owns and operates a 1,000-acre farm. He grows muscadines, peaches, plums, watermelon, butter beans, peas and other specialty crops. James is dedicated to preserving the culture of agriculture in southern Georgia. As a farmer, mentor and educator, he hopes to inspire the next generation of producers to consider life on the land. He serves on the Board of Directors of the National Black Growers Council, is a respected leader in the agricultural and specialty crop community. James will give Black and other underserved growers a strong voice in how crop insurance programs need to be modified to create a stronger safety net for all producers.

“We need the whole diversity of American agriculture represented on federal boards like FCIC,” James said. “When we come from different backgrounds, we bring unique ways of looking at things. I am already learning so much and I’m happy to be here.”

More on the FCIC Board

In addition to the three USDA members, the FCIC board includes:

- Four producers, at least one of whom is a specialty crop producer.
- One individual involved in insurance, often an agent.
- One individual knowledgeable about reinsurance or regulation.

The Federal Crop Insurance Act requires that the four producer board members come from diverse geographic areas and represent a cross-section of agricultural commodities.

Board members are appointed to staggered four-year terms and members serve up to two terms.

More Information

The FCIC board met this week. More information about the FCIC is available on the [RMA website](#).

RMA has taken a number of steps to improve the reach of crop insurance, including investing in risk management education and improving insurance options for specialty crop, organic and urban producers. For example, RMA invested \$2.2 million in Risk Management Education in 2022. Meanwhile, in 2022, RMA unveiled improvements to its Whole-Farm Revenue Protection as well as the new Micro Farm insurance program aimed at serving specialty crop, organic, urban and small-scale operations.

Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private insurance agents. A list of insurance agents is available online using the RMA [Agent Locator](#). Learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at rma.usda.gov.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit usda.gov.

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