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Agriculture Secretary Vilsack Reappoints Four Members to FCIC Board of Directors

News Release |
Washington DC
|
October 7, 2016
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WASHINGTON, Oct. 7, 2016 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has reappointed four members to the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC) Board of Directors (Board). James Bardenhagen, John F. Finston, Iris V. Sáenz and Kenneth Ray Sneed, who joined the Board in 2013, will each serve another four-year term of office.

The FCIC Board oversees the federal crop insurance program, managed by the Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Risk Management Agency (RMA). The Board reviews crop insurance products presented by outside parties and RMA, and determines which programs will best help farmers and ranchers. Crop insurance provides protection against a loss in production due to natural perils such as adverse weather conditions, insects or plant disease, or wildlife.

“We appreciate the good work and dedication of these four Board members on behalf of American farmers and ranchers,” Secretary Vilsack said.

The Federal Crop Insurance Act requires that non-USDA Board members represent core groups involved in managing farm risk. This includes four producers, at least one of whom is a specialty crop producer; one individual involved in insurance (often an agent); and one individual knowledgeable about reinsurance or regulation. The act also requires that the four producer Board members come from diverse geographic areas and represent a cross-section of agricultural commodities.

James Bardenhagen, of Bardenhagen Farms, is a specialty crop farmer growing apples, cherries, grapes, potatoes, hay, and small grains in Suttons Bay, Mich. He has been a participant in the crop insurance program for more than 16 years and was a Michigan State University Extension director in Leelanau County for 20 years.

John F. Finston is General Counsel and Deputy Commissioner for California's Department of Insurance, an insurance regulator, and an attorney in San Francisco, Calif. Before joining the California Department of Insurance he was in private practice focusing on insurance, reinsurance, and insurance regulation for more than 30 years.

Iris V. Sáenz, a native of Premont, Texas, is a crop insurance agent and the owner of South Texas Insurance Services in McAllen, Texas. She has sold and serviced crop insurance policies for more than 28 years. She is also owner of MonteDuro Land and Cattle Company, a Beefmaster cow-calf operation and land management company.

Kenneth Ray Sneed of Sneed Farms, Inc., is a third generation farmer growing soybeans, cotton, corn, and wheat in partnership with his brothers in Drummonds, Tenn., for 38 years. He has 21 years of experience with the crop insurance program.

Full biographies for the FCIC Board members are available on the RMA website.

The Federal Crop Insurance Corporation promotes the economic stability of agriculture through a sound system of crop insurance and by providing the means for research and experience helpful in developing such insurance. Management is vested in the board of directors subject to the general supervision of the Secretary of Agriculture. The board is responsible for maintaining and creating new programs for risk management and risk mitigation in agriculture.

USDA works to strengthen and support American agriculture, an industry that supports one in 11 American jobs, provides American consumers with more than 80 percent of the food we consume, ensures that Americans spend less of their paychecks at the grocery store than most people in other countries, and supports markets for homegrown renewable energy and materials. Since 2009, USDA has provided \$5.6 billion in disaster relief to farmers and ranchers; expanded risk management tools with products like Whole-Farm Revenue Protection; and helped farm businesses grow with \$36 billion in farm credit. The Department has engaged its resources to support a strong next generation of farmers and ranchers by

improving access to land and capital; building new markets and market opportunities; and extending new conservation opportunities. USDA has developed new markets for rural-made products, including more than 2,500 biobased products through USDA's BioPreferred program; and invested \$64 billion in infrastructure and community facilities to help improve the quality of life in rural America. For more information, visit www.usda.gov

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