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USDA Adds Flexibility for Cover Crop Management in Crop Year 2020

News Release |

Washington DC

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WASHINGTON DC, June 28, 2019 – The 2018 Farm Bill mandated changes to the treatment of cover crops for U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs, which add more flexibility to when cover crops must be terminated while remaining eligible for crop insurance. USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Risk Management Agency (RMA) developed new guidelines and policy provisions to enact these changes, which will be available beginning with the 2020 crop year.

“USDA is working to quickly implement the 2018 Farm Bill to better serve our customers,” said Bill Northey, USDA Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation. “These new guidelines are not being issued as a result of the current nationwide weather issues, but will provide more flexibility for our customers who want to plant cover crops to meet their production and conservation goals for their farms.”

Producers now know up front that insurance will attach at time of planting the insured crop. Cover crop management practices are covered by Good Farming Practice provisions, and the guidelines are no longer a requirement for insurance to attach. Additionally, with these changes, NRCS is now recognized as an agricultural expert resource for cover crop management systems.

“Now, cover crop management practices will be treated like all other farming decisions such as fertilizer application, seeding rates, and tillage practices,” Northey

said.

More Information

Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the RMA Agent Locator. Producers can use the RMA Cost Estimator to get a premium amount estimate of their insurance needs online.

Cover crops have the potential to provide multiple benefits in a cropping system. To learn more about cover crop termination guidelines, selection tools and more, visit the [NRCS Cover Crops and Soil Health webpage](#) and [RMA Cover Crops webpage](#).

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