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USDA Allows Some Farmers to Hay, Graze or Chop Cover Crops Early This Year

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WASHINGTON, August 17, 2020 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Risk Management Agency (RMA) today announced that this year farmers who planted cover crops on prevented plant acres in select counties in North and South Dakota will be permitted to hay, graze or chop those fields beginning Sept. 1 rather than Nov. 1. The change is being made because of excessive moisture and flooding in 42 counties in the two states.

“Farmers in the Dakotas have seen excessive moisture over the winter and into this spring, and we made this one-year adjustment to help farmers remain good stewards of the land and provide an opportunity to ensure quality forage is available for livestock this fall,” said Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation Bill Northey.

“Unlike 2019 when there was widespread flooding in the spring,” said RMA Administrator Martin Barbre, “this adjustment is targeted to the areas most impacted. The change still will allow farmers to maintain eligibility for their full 2020 prevented planting indemnity.”

Qualifying counties include:

North Dakota: Barnes, Benson, Bottineau, Cass, Dickey, Eddy, Foster, Grand Forks, Griggs, Kidder, La Moure, McIntosh, Nelson, Ramsey, Ransom, Rolette, Sargent,

Sheridan, Steele, Stutsman, Towner, Traill, and Wells

South Dakota: Beadle, Brown, Brule, Campbell, Clark, Codington, Day, Edmunds, Faulk, Hand, Hanson, Hyde, McPherson, Marshall, Potter, Roberts, Sanborn, Spink, and Walworth

Flooding and excessive rainfall in parts of the country have resulted in a significant amount of prevented planting claims under Federal crop insurance. Given these extraordinary weather events and the need for animal feed, flexibility around the use of a cover crop planted on prevented planted acreage for haying, grazing and cutting for silage, haylage and baleage has become necessary.

RMA is authorizing additional flexibilities due to coronavirus while continuing to support producers, working through AIPs to deliver services, including processing policies, claims and agreements. RMA staff are working with AIPs and other customers by phone, mail and electronically to continue supporting crop insurance coverage for producers. Farmers with crop insurance questions or needs should continue to contact their insurance agents about conducting business remotely (by telephone or email). More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

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.

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