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USDA Risk Management Agency Upgrades Rainfall Data Source

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Change improves transparency and access to data used in several Federal crop insurance programs.

(Washington, D.C., April 30, 2026) – The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Risk Management Agency (RMA) is upgrading the source for rainfall data used in several Federal crop insurance programs, moving from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center (CPC) to the National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI). RMA will begin this transition with the Tropical Storm Option on the Hurricane Insurance Protection - Wind Index program on April 30, 2026.

This change will also affect Pasture, Rangeland, Forage (PRF); Annual Forage (AF); Apiculture; and Shellfish insurance programs that use precipitation data to calculate coverage and indemnities. PRF, Apiculture, and Shellfish will transition on August 31, 2026, with AF following on April 30, 2027. RMA will release corresponding producer tools and resources at each contract change date to help explain the new dataset. Producers should work with their crop insurance agent to review impacts on their coverage.

"These upgrades are about giving producers and their agents better tools to understand and trust the data behind their coverage," said RMA Administrator Pat

Swanson. “The coverage areas, the way these programs work and our commitment to actuarial soundness are not changing. What is changing is that producers and agents will now be able to look up the rainfall data themselves in a format they can use.”

The geographic grids used to measure rainfall and overall structure of the programs will remain the same. Keeping the grids in place helps minimize impacts to producers. With this upgrade, RMA anticipates that final grid index values and indemnity payments will be delivered faster. Historical data shows that overall loss ratios remain nearly identical under the new data source.

Producers and agents have raised concerns about the current data source. The transition to using NCEI data addresses those concerns in three key ways:

- It’s easy to access. NCEI data is available in formats like Microsoft Excel that anyone can open and read. The current CPC data is in a technical format that requires special software to view.
- Potential for data enhancements. RMA is working with NCEI and state climatologists to review options on expanding the number of weather stations used in the data over time which was previously not an option with CPC.
- It comes with better support. RMA has a formal agreement with NCEI that includes dedicated staff to respond to RMA questions, a consistent data release schedule, and a pathway to add more weather stations over time. This supports faster, more predictable indemnity payments.

More Information

RMA secures the future of agriculture by providing world class risk management tools to rural America through Federal crop insurance and risk management education programs. RMA provides policies for more than 130 crops and is constantly working to adjust and create new policies based on producer needs and feedback.

Contact a crop insurance agent to see how Federal crop insurance can meet the specific needs of your operation. Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available online at the RMA Agent Locator. Producers can learn more about crop insurance and the

modern farm safety net at rma.usda.gov or by contacting their RMA Regional Office. RMA's Basics for Beginners provides information for those new to crop insurance.

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