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USDA's Response to Drought and Related Disasters of 2006

Ongoing drought has taken a toll on farmers and ranchers in some parts of the United States in 2006. USDA responded this year by providing disaster and other types of assistance to producers suffering losses due to drought and related conditions.

The following are some of the measures taken by USDA to assist farmers and ranchers in 2006:

- USDA designated more than 1,000 U.S. counties as primary disaster areas so far this calendar year. More than 930 were drought-related. This makes all qualified farm operators in the designated areas eligible for emergency (EM) loans from USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA).
- In Fiscal Year 2006, FSA has provided \$48 million in EM loan assistance.
- In mid-July, USDA announced the expansion of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage eligible for emergency haying and grazing for livestock producers hit hard by drought. The expansion allows livestock producers from eligible counties to obtain needed hay or forage. The expanded area radiates 150 miles out from any county approved for emergency haying and grazing.
- USDA also reduced producers' CRP rental payments to 10 percent, instead of the standard 25 percent, on CRP lands that are hayed or grazed under emergency authority in 2006.
- In late June, USDA announced \$11.8 million in Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) funding for 18 states to help producers rehabilitate land damaged by drought and other natural disasters.
- On March 24, Johanns announced that agricultural producers in 16 Texas counties adversely affected by wildfires would be eligible to receive \$8.134 million in ECP funds.
- Just three days before, March 21, Johanns announced that agricultural producers in six Oklahoma counties and 27 north Texas counties affected by wildfires could remove dry grass on and move cattle to CRP acreage, without facing charges for grazing value or the baled value of removed forage.
- On March 15, USDA Deputy Secretary Chuck Conner announced the allocation of more than \$20 million in ECP funds to 26 states affected by drought, wildfires and other natural disasters.

USDA has also made other programs available to assist farmers and ranchers, including Federal Crop Insurance and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program. Interested farmers may contact their local USDA Service Centers for further information on eligibility requirements and application procedures for these and other programs. Additional information is also available online at: <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov>.

A list of ongoing disaster programs, administered by FSA, is available online at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pas/publications/facts/ongoingrelief05.pdf>.