

President Trump Signs Farm Bill Into Law

Friday, December 21, 2018

By Mary Jane Buerkle

Plains Cotton Growers expresses their deep appreciation to all who had a part in creating and passing H.R. 2, the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018, also known as the 2018 Farm Bill.

The bill easily cleared the Senate and the House last week by votes of 87-13 and 369-47, respectively. President Trump signed the bill into law on Thursday, December 20.

“The 2018 Farm Bill gives us as cotton growers the assurances we need to stay competitive and helps preserve our family farms,” PCG President Stacy Smith said. “We greatly appreciate all who have been involved in creating this policy package that gives us much-needed stability so we can continue to produce fiber, food, and fuel for the future.”

A few highlights of the bill that will positively impact growers are as follows:

- Beginning with the 2019 crop year, growers will be able to make a new election into the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs and beginning with the 2021 crop year, growers will be able to choose each year between ARC and PLC on a crop-by-crop and farm-by-farm basis, allowing for additional flexibility.
- An “escalator provision” allows for PLC Reference Prices to adjust if the five-year Olympic average price increases significantly.
- The definition of a “family farm” has been expanded within Actively Engaged in Farming regulations to include nieces, nephews, and first cousins, which allows for continuation of lineal descent among farming operations.
- Landowners/growers will have a one-time opportunity to update payment yields for PLC, based on 2013-2017 history, on a covered commodity by covered commodity basis.
- Crop insurance is protected and maintained, with modest enhancements to the program.
- Conservation Reserve Program acres are expanded, and Environmental Quality Incentives Program funding is increased.

More information, including full text and a summary of the bill, is at <https://agriculture.house.gov/farmbill/>.

PCG recognizes the steadfast, tireless efforts of House Agriculture Committee Chairman Mike Conaway, Ranking Member Collin Peterson, Senate Ag Committee Chairman Pat Roberts, Ranking Member Debbie Stabenow and all members and staff of both committees, including U.S. Rep. Jodey Arrington of Lubbock, for working diligently to complete the bill. PCG thanks every Senator and Representative who voted in support of the bill, including Senator John Cornyn, Senator Ted Cruz, and PCG-area

representative Mac Thornberry, and is grateful to President Trump for his support of agriculture by signing the bill into law.

“We look forward to continuing our work on behalf of cotton growers across the PCG service area as we move into the implementation phase,” Smith said.

Connect With PCG!

Find us on Facebook and Twitter

<http://www.facebook.com/plainscottongrowers>

<http://www.twitter.com/PCGNews>

Subscribe to PCG Email Services!

<http://ow.ly/gp7KZ>

USDA Launches Second Round of Trade Mitigation Payments

Monday, December 17, 2018

From the USDA

At the direction of President Donald J. Trump, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue today (Monday, December 17) launched the second and final round of trade mitigation payments aimed at assisting farmers suffering from damage due to unjustified trade retaliation by foreign nations. Producers of certain commodities will now be eligible to receive Market Facilitation Program (MFP) payments for the second half of their 2018 production.

“The President reaffirmed his support for American farmers and ranchers and made good on his promise, authorizing the second round of payments to be made in short order. While there have been positive movements on the trade front, American farmers are continuing to experience losses due to unjustified trade retaliation by foreign nations. This assistance will help with short-term cash flow issues as we move into the new year,” said Perdue.

Secretary Perdue announced in July that USDA would act to aid farmers in response to trade damage from unjustified retaliation. President Trump directed Secretary Perdue to craft a short-term relief strategy to help protect agricultural producers while the Administration works on free, fair, and reciprocal trade deals to open more markets to help American farmers compete globally. In September, USDA initiated three programs to aid American agriculture in sustaining the short-term damages associated with the trade disputes and securing long-term, stable export markets.

Details of programs currently employed by USDA:

- USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) has been administering MFP to provide the first payments to almond, corn, cotton, dairy, hog, sorghum, soybean, fresh sweet cherry, and wheat producers since September 2018 for the first 50 percent of their 2018 production.

(“COTTON NEWS” continued on Page 2)

- USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is administering a food purchase and distribution program to purchase up to \$1.2 billion in commodities unfairly targeted by unjustified retaliation. USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is distributing these commodities through nutrition assistance programs, such as The Emergency Food Assistance Program and child nutrition programs. So far, USDA has procured some portion of 16 of the 29 commodities included in the program, totaling more than 4,500 truckloads of food. AMS will continue purchasing commodities for delivery throughout 2019.
- Through the Foreign Agricultural Service’s (FAS) Agricultural Trade Promotion (ATP) program, \$200 million is being made available to develop foreign markets for U.S. agricultural products. The program will help U.S. agricultural exporters identify and access new markets and help mitigate the adverse effects of other countries’ restrictions. The application period closed in November with more than \$600 million in requested activities from more than 70 organizations. FAS will announce ATP funding awards in early January.

Market Facilitation Program

Producers need only sign-up once for the MFP to be eligible for the first and second payments. The MFP sign-up period opened in September and runs through January 15, 2019, with information and instructions provided at www.farmers.gov/mfp. Producers must complete an application by January 15, 2019 but have until May 1, 2019 to certify their 2018 production. The MFP provides payments to almond, cotton, corn, dairy, hog, sorghum, soybean, fresh sweet cherry, and wheat producers who have been significantly impacted by actions of foreign governments resulting in the loss of traditional exports. The MFP is established under the statutory authority of the Commodity Credit Corporation CCC Charter Act and is under the administration of USDA’s FSA. Eligible producers should apply after harvest is complete, as payments will only be issued once production is reported.

For farmers who have already applied, completed harvest, and certified their 2018 production, a second payment will be issued on the remaining 50 percent of the producer’s total production, multiplied by the MFP rate for the specific commodity.

Commodity	First and Second Payment Rate	Est. Total Payment** (in \$1,000s)
Almonds (shelled)	\$0.03 / lb.	\$63,300
Cotton	\$0.06 / lb.	\$553,800
Corn	\$0.01 / bu.	\$192,000
Dairy (milk)	\$0.12 / cwt.	\$254,800
Pork (hogs)	\$8.00 / head	\$580,600
Soybeans	\$1.65 / bu.	\$7,259,400
Sorghum	\$0.86 / bu.	\$313,600
Sweet Cherries (fresh)	\$0.16 / lb.	\$111,500
Wheat	\$0.14 / bu.	\$238,400
Total		\$9,567,400

** Total payment rate on 100% of production

MFP payments are limited to a combined \$125,000 for corn, cotton, sorghum, soybeans, and wheat capped per person or legal entity. MFP payments are also limited to a combined \$125,000 for dairy and hog producers, and a combined \$125,000 for fresh sweet cherry and almond producers. Applicants must also have an average adjusted gross income for tax years 2014, 2015, and 2016 of less than \$900,000. Applicants must also comply with the provisions of the Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation regulations.

For more further information or to locate and contact local FSA offices, interested producers can visit www.farmers.gov.

Upcoming Area Ag Conferences

January 11 – West Plains Crops Conference, 8 a.m.-3 p.m., Sundown Room, South Plains College, **Levelland**. CEUs available. More info: Kerry Siders, EA-IPM, or Wes Utley, CEA-AG/NR, (806) 894-3159.

January 15– Ochiltree Crop Profitability Meeting, 10 a.m.-Noon, Ochiltree County Expo Center, 402 Expo Drive, **Perryton**. More info: Scott Strawn, CEA-AG/NR, (806) 435-4501.

January 15 – Southern Mesa Ag Conference, time TBA, Forrest Park Community Center, **Lamesa**. CEUs available. More info: Tommy Doederlein, EA-IPM, or Gary Roschetsky, CEA-AG/NR, (806) 872-3444.

January 16 – SE Panhandle Ag Conference, 8 a.m.-3 p.m., Kathy Fowler Insurance Ball Room, **Memphis**. CEUs available, cost \$10 at the door. More info: Josh Brooks, CEA-AG/NR, (806) 259-3015.

January 17 – South Plains Ag Conference, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., Texas Red Wine Event Center, 2127 US 380, **Brownfield**. CEUs available, including auxin training. Cost \$10 at the door. More info: Geoff Cooper, CEA-AG/NR, (806) 637-4060.

January 23 – NW Panhandle Cotton Conference, 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Rita Blanca Coliseum, **Dalhart**. Three CEUs in IPM available. No cost. More info: Mike Bragg, CEA-AG/NR, (806) 244-4434.

January 25 – Caprock Cotton Conference, 7 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Floyd County Friends Unity Center, **Muncy** (between Floydada and Lockney on U.S. Highway 70). CEUs available. More info: Cristen Brooks, Floyd County CEA-AG/NR, (806) 983-4912, or Dr. Caitlin Jackson, Crosby County CEA-AG/NR, (806) 675-2347.

January 28 – Top of Texas Cotton Conference, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., M.K. Brown Auditorium, 1100 W. Coronado Drive, **Pampa**. Three CEUs in IPM available; no cost. More info: Jody Bradford, Carson County CEA-AG/NR, (806) 537-3882.

January 28 – Cotton Pre-Plant Meeting, 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Happy State Bank Conference Room, 500 Main St., **Silverton**. More info: Mason Carter, CEA-AG/NR, (806) 823-2522.



Editor’s Note:

“Cotton News”, a weekly service of Plains Cotton Growers to the cotton industry and news media in the 41-county High Plains area, is mailed from Lubbock each Friday. Its contents are confined to news items and comments pertaining to the High Plains cotton industry which is so vital to U.S. all. Anyone interested in making comments about the contents of this column can call 806-792-4904 or Email PCG at: editor@plainscotton.org