

# New law consolidates farm disaster programs

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland said Tuesday the signing by President Carter of the "Federal Crop Insurance Act of 1980" will make available an "all-risk" type of crop insurance on virtually all major crops in all major crop producing areas in the country.

He called the bill a "first step in consolidation of many conflicting federal farm disaster assistance programs" and announced "a systematic expansion program at the rate of an additional 250 counties a year for the next five years in order to permit rapid but orderly extension of insurance coverage to farmers."

Bergland said, "I have long advocated a sound, actuarially-based insurance program as preferable to the many ad hoc programs now assisting our farm producers. These programs deliver too little money, to too few farmers, and usually too late to be of maximum benefit."

"After three years of hard negotiations, we've been able to produce a partnership arrangement among the federal government, the farmer and the private insurance industry in this bill."

The Federal Crop In-

urance Corporation of the U.S. Department of Agriculture for more than 42 years has administered an "all-risk" insurance and now is establishing a local delivery system that will permit farmers to select either a federal or private insurance agent to service the new all-risk insurance plan, effective for the 1981 crop year.

"This partnership will eliminate some of the problems of the old crop insurance law and permit easy access and servicing for farmer policyholders at the local level where it really counts," said Bergland.

The new law also extends for one year the low-yield disaster payments program administered by the USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service. Farmers will be eligible to participate in both programs for the 1981 crop year, but will not be able to receive duplicate subsidies.

"In order to retain full eligibility for disaster payments, farmers will have to pay the full cost of their federal crop insurance this first year," said Bergland, or "they may waive disaster program benefits and receive a subsidy of 30 percent of their FCIC premiums up to a maximum

of 65 percent of their average yield for an extended period of years. These options apply only to crops eligible for disaster payments, including upland cotton, sorghum, barley, corn, wheat and rice."

Only the disaster crops have these limitations, he added.

FCIC officials said farmers will receive official notification by letter of their options for these programs and will be asked to make a choice shortly after planting.

Farmers will be offered an option of three levels of coverage levels and three price elections to cover production losses, said FCIC officials. Coverage levels will be 50, 65 and 75 percent of average yield as determined for a representative period of years. At least one of the price levels will approximate the market price for the commodity as projected by FCIC in advance.

"These program improvements, together with

the availability of the program on a much wider scale, will provide the most complete disaster protection package to farmers available anywhere," Bergland said. "And the new insurance plan will build upon the actuarially sound insurance principles already

in the present FCIC program."

Complete program details and announcement of new counties for the 1981 crop year will be published as soon as a new FCIC board of directors is appointed, as required by the legislation, the secretary said.

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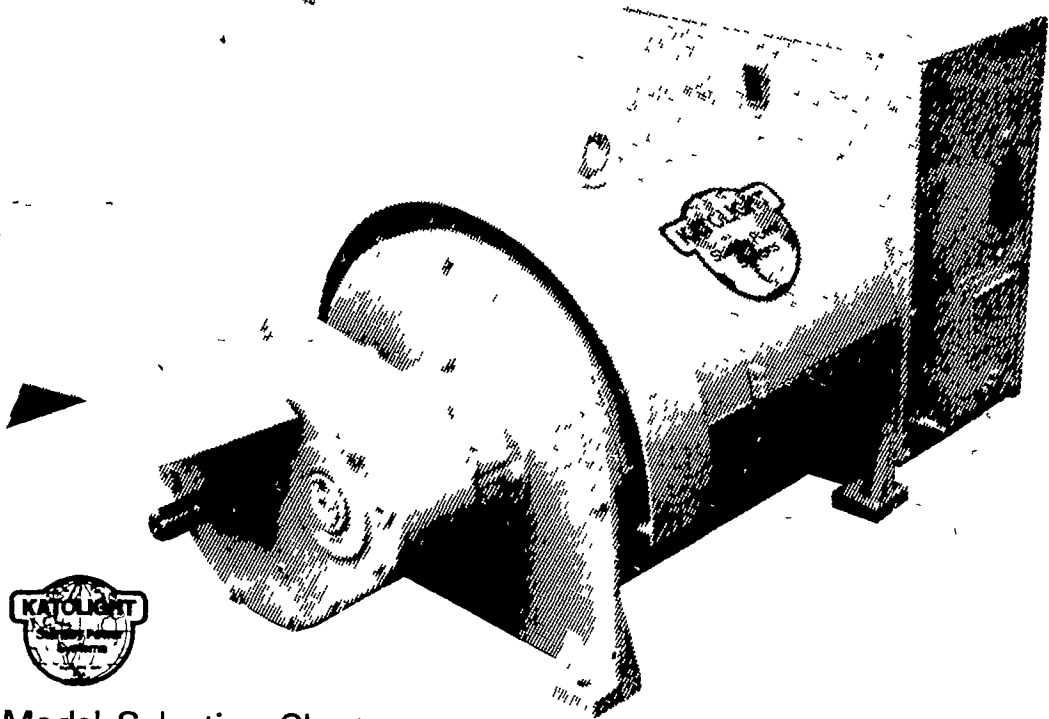
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