

60 Counties Eligible

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Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) offices applied for emergency assistance, and which were forwarded to the federal government for consideration, the 60 counties were approved because of shared borders.

In order to receive aid, the crops must first be estimated by ASCS personnel, and the crop plan must be on file at that office.

Those 41 counties which received disaster designation based on in-county conditions included Adams, Armstrong, Bedford, Blair, Bradford, Butler, Cambria, Centre, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Columbia, Crawford, Cumberland, Dauphin, Fayette, Forest, Franklin, Fulton, Greene, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lycoming, McKean, Mifflin, Montour, Perry, Potter, Schuylkill, Snyder, Somerset, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, Union, Venango, Washington, Wyoming and York counties.

The 19 contiguous counties also will receive eligibility. They are Allegheny, Beaver, Berks, Cameron, Carbon, Chester, Elk, Erie, Indiana, Jefferson, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Luzerne, Mercer, Northumberland, Warren, Wayne, and Westmoreland counties.

According to a news release from Donald Unangst, head of the state office of USDA's ASCS, "This action follows detailed analysis by USDA staffs at the county level which led to the recommendation by the federal agricultural state emergency board for disaster status for the affected counties."

According to the analysis by USDA, the hardest hit crops are

corn, hay and pasture, soybeans, vegetables and nursery crops.

According to Unangst, the estimated losses exceed \$493 million and are expected to increase as crops mature and the damage can be measured.

Farmers in the 60 counties who can show 30 percent of more loss on at least one crop will have eight months to apply for 4.5 percent interest loans through the Farmers Home Administration. However, in addition to normal eligibility requirements, including crop insurance for production or physical loss.

Farmers in those counties are also eligible for technical assistance by the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) in revising conservation plans, getting advice on increasing water conservation, developing seeding practices for drought tolerant species, developing alternative or supplemental water sources, and in prevent the loss of land due to erosion caused by a drought-induced lack of adequate crop cover.

The designation also allows farmers to withdraw from 1991 Acreage Reduction Program for the crop which was prevented from being planted or which failed.

In addition:

- Haying and grazing on set aside land has been authorized in 49 counties. Contact the local ASCS office for more information.

- Emergency livestock feed programs are being activated. Counties have until Oct. 31 to file for a program to assist livestock producers in making cash assistance available for feed purchases, or to provide for low cost purchases of Commodity Credit Corpo-

ration (CCC) owned stocks of feed. There were 35 counties approved last week.

- Federal crop insurance people began preparing claims on many of the 7,139 farms with active policies in the state. However, according to Unangst, farmers, program participants or not, should visit local USDA offices to determine what options they have and to get advice on the disposal of failed crops, late crop options, etc.

- All other federal and non-federal agriculture services are gearing, or are geared up to tackle the drought problem and to provide informational assistance.

As of yet, no direct cash assistance program has been established. However, federal politicians have said they are working to introduce legislation which would do so in light of the number of outstanding drought loans made in 1988.

In Lancaster County, Ray Brubaker, county executive ASCS director, and chair of the USDA county emergency board said in a statement, "The action (by the federal government) represents recognition that the severe weather conditions had a serious affect on Pennsylvania's agriculture despite recent rains."

Brubaker said the worst damage was done early in the growing season in Lancaster and that he expects improvements in haying and on grazing land.

From the federal level, on Tuesday, Secretary Madigan announced his intention to allow haying and grazing on Conservation Reserve Program acreage in those 60 counties because of the drought.

"We would prefer not to hay or graze CRP lands," Madigan said.

"We are responding to isolated situations with a cautious, prudent program that sustains the environmental protections that are the heart of the CRP."

Before haying and grazing can be allowed, however, there are requirements which must be met. Requirements which are more restrictive than in past drought years in which haying and grazing on CRP was permitted.

According to Madigan, qualifying farmers in counties where rainfall and forage are at least 40 percent below normal are eligible to apply for haying and grazing on CRP on the condition that:

- All determinations are made on a county-by-county basis. All applications are to be reviewed in Washington for accuracy.

- There will be a 50 percent offset in CRP payments for the current contract year.

- Individual producers must show a 40 percent loss in forage production.

- Hay harvested may not be sold, but must be used on to maintain the producers own livestock. Leasing of grazing privileges will not be permitted.

- Hay harvest and livestock

information will have to be submitted to the county ASCS office.

- At least 23 percent of the field must be left undisturbed for wildlife cover. And if the ground is to be hayed, at least 25 percent of the total acres in contiguous fields must be left undisturbed.

- Any permanent destruction of CRP cover must be re-established at owner expense. Also vegetative cover specifications will not be waived to the drought.

- No haying or grazing will be allowed on cover planted after Dec. 1, 1989. Covers planted between July 13, 1989 and Dec. 1, 1989 must be inspected and approved by an SCS official before any grazing is allowed.

- Only one cutting of hay will be allowed, and no haying after Sept. 15.

- Hayed acres must have at least 3 inches of stubble remaining.

- Each county grazing period and the stocking rate is to be determined by the ASC county committee. There will be no grazing after Oct. 1.

- No assistance will be provided for livestock facilities, such as fences or watering equipment on CRP land.

PMMB Visits Farms

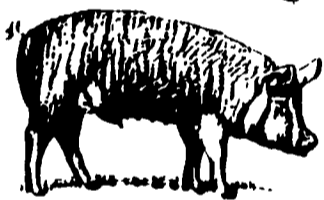
VERNON ACHENBACH JR.

Lancaster Farming Staff
HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Prior to its August 15 informal drought hearing, two members of the Pennsylvania Milk Marketing Board made a meandering, cross-state trip to assess the effect of the drought for themselves.

Donald Lanus, chairman of the board, and Leon Wilkinson, a member, offered a report on their findings to the board for its information, prior to the hearing. The hearing is still on-going, in that the PMMB is still accepting written testimony.

The report the two men submit-

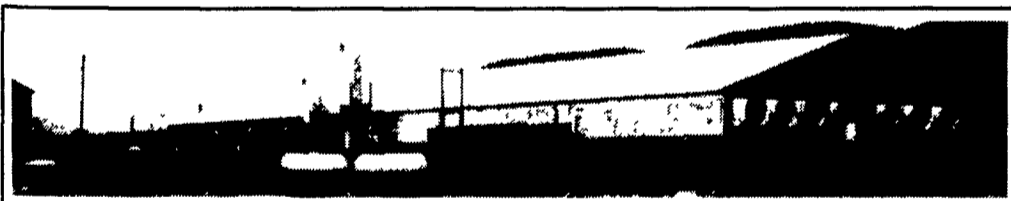
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