

USDA Offers CRP Early Out Option

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman last week announced an "early-out" option for some producers with acreage enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program.

Acreage released under "early-out" will have crop acreage bases, allotments and quotas restored for the 1996 crop year.

"This early out option is important for several reasons," Glickman said.

"First, producers should have the opportunity to take advantage of the high market prices by planting more of their land. Second, the offer is consistent with USDA's responsibility of ensuring a grain supply that meets market demand.

"Third, offering an 'early-out' for productive, less erodible land is consistent with the Clinton Administration's commitment to an environmentally sound, cost-effective CRP," Glickman said.

This "early-out" option applies only to those CRP contracts scheduled to expire on Sept. 30, 1996.

Eligible land must have an erodibility index of 15 or less.

Highly erodible land released early from the CRP for cropping must have an approved conservation plan or, if for haying or pasture, a haying or grazing plan.

For approved conservation plans, producers will have to meet the requirements of alternative conservation systems.

Land devoted to useful life easements, field windbreaks, grass waterways, shallow water areas, filterstrips, bottomland timber on wetlands, shelterbelts and land within an average of 100 feet of a stream or other permanent water body will not be eligible for the early-out option.

"These eligibility qualifications for the early-out offer ensure that environmentally sensitive land continues to remain under contract," Glickman said.

"Unlike the option in the Budget Reconciliation bill vetoed by the President which would have indiscriminately allowed release of any CRP acreage with only 60 days notice from the landowner, the Administration's action maintains the long-term environmental investments in the CRP.

"President Clinton has stated his strong support for the CRP and is committed to ensuring its continuity for years to come. Consistent with this commitment, one of the administration's farm bill recommendations to Congress is for new enrollment authority for 1996 and beyond.

"Unfortunately, Congress did not include new enrollment authority in its reconciliation bill, as noted by the President in his veto message on this legislation. If Congress renews this authority, the Department fully intends to replace the early-released acreage

with enrollments of highly sensitive lands.

"Having new enrollments is critical to maintaining and improving the program over the next 10 years. We will work with Congress to ensure that farmers continue to have the opportunity to enroll environmentally-sensitive acres into the program to improve soil, wildlife habitat and water quality," Glickman said.

"Sign-up dates and other details of this 'early-out' offer will be announced after the rulemaking process is completed," Glickman said.

"We will also make an announcement on options to extend expiring CRP contracts before the 'early-out' signup period begins, giving producers all of the information they need to make their CRP decisions."

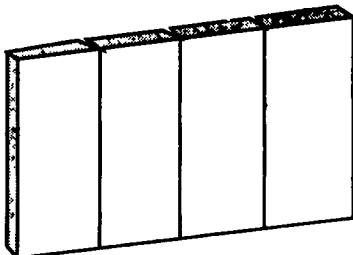
Under the CRP, producers retire environmentally-sensitive cropland from production for 10 to 15 years. In return, USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation provides annual rental payments and cost-share payments to establish and maintain vegetative

cover. To date 36.4 million acres have been enrolled in the CRP and, in fiscal year 1996, payments totaling \$1.8 billion were made to CRP participants on approximately 375,000 contracts.



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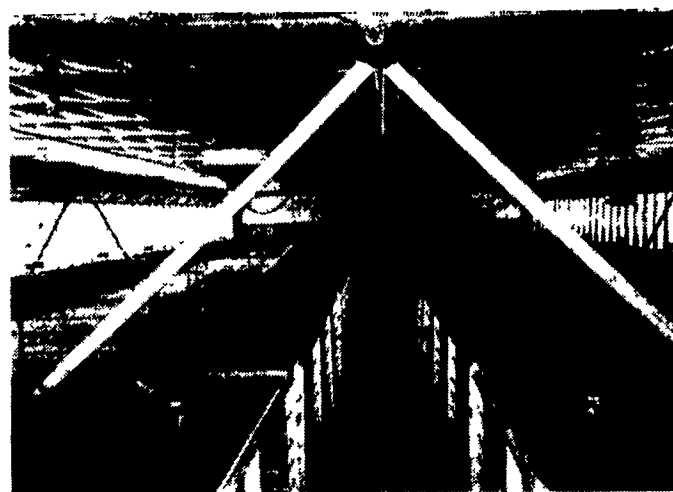
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