

Gov. Ridge Signs Bill To Give Pa. Farmers Additional Crop-Loss Payment

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Gov. Tom Ridge recently signed Senate Bill 1417 to allow the Department of Agriculture to make final crop-loss payments to producers who qualified under Act 57, the

drought disaster relief law signed into law last year.

"Our farmers exemplify the best of Pennsylvania," Gov. Ridge said. "They work hard, and they don't ask for much in return. I was proud last year to sign legislation offering our

farmers the largest state drought-aid package in the nation. And, today, I'm proud to help them again — as they continue to recover from last year's devastating drought.

"With this new law, our Department of Agriculture will be able to complete the job. We will send a final payment to qualified applicants, in an amount that will be nearly equal to what they already have received."

Gov. Ridge thanked Sen. Noah W. Wenger (R-Lancaster) and Rep. Raymond Bunt Jr. (R-Montgomery) for supporting this bill.

Last year, Pennsylvania pro-

vided more drought assistance for Pennsylvania farmers (\$5 million for hay assistance, \$5.6 million for crop insurance, and \$60 million in crop-loss payments for a total of \$70.6 million in state funds) than in any other Mid-Atlantic or Northeastern state.

These final payments reflect the balance of the \$60 million portion of the existing disaster relief package.

The \$5.6 million portion of the package designated for crop insurance assistance will be administered directly through insurance underwriters and the federal Risk Management Agency. The Department of Agriculture has arranged to have the producers' crop insurance billing statement reflect the state

assistance, eliminating the need for producers to be reimbursed.

"I am very proud of our producers for managing through a very difficult crop year," Agriculture Secretary Samuel E. Hayes Jr. said. "Likewise, I thank Gov. Ridge and Pennsylvania lawmakers for quickly responding with \$70.6 million in state assistance. This financial assistance has made a difference to our farm families. It has helped them to protect the viability of Pennsylvania's agricultural community and its capacity to produce food and fiber."

SB 1417, sponsored by Sen. William L. Slocum (R-Warren), passed the House 189 to 1, and the Senate unanimously. It takes effect immediately.

Glickman Details Plans For \$30 Million To Help Sheep, Lamb Farmers

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Secretary Dan Glickman announced recently that sheep and lamb producers will receive a total of \$30 million in direct cash payments to help improve their production efficiency and the marketability of lamb meat.

Sign-up for the program started June 19, 2000. This is part of the Clinton Administration's three-year \$100 million assistance plan to help U.S. sheep and lamb farmers.

Poor market conditions and record low prices have caused major losses for America's sheep and lamb producers during the last several years. This step is designed to bring immediate financial assistance to those who need it most.

During the first year of the program — July 22, 1999 to September 30, 2000 — payments may be made for rams, sheep improvement, and facility improvement. Year one involves payments for Rams at \$100 per head, limited to \$2,500; sheep enrolled in an eligible sheep improvement program at 50 cents

per head, limited to \$500; and sheep facility improvement at 20 percent of cost, limited to \$2,500.

The maximum combined payment per farm is \$5,500, according to the interim final rule for the program that was published in the Federal Register June 21, 2000. Sheep and lamb farmers whose gross income for 1999 was greater than \$2.5 million are not eligible for payments.

For years two and three, farmers are eligible for payments of \$3 for each feeder lamb, and \$8 for each slaughter lamb marketed during the June 1-July 31 period. There will be no maximum payments or herd limits during years two and three of the program. However, feeder lamb producers who gross income for 2000 or 2001 exceed \$2.5 million are not eligible for payment.

The Lancaster County Farm Service Agency (FSA) is accepting applications for year one. The FSA is located at the Farm and Home Center, 1383 Arcadia Road, Lancaster PA 17601.

Congressman Demands Sound Science In Dredging Upper Hudson Valley

GLENMONT, N.Y. — Farmers and rural landowners of the Upper Hudson River appreciate Congressman John Sweeney's recent actions to oppose the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) dredging of the Hudson River without the results of a study on the risks associated with dredging.

New York Farm Bureau, the state's largest general farm advocacy organization, joins Congressman Sweeney in encouraging EPA to delay dredging until completion of a National Academy of Sciences (NAS) study that would make comprehensive, science-based recommendations regarding remediation technology for contaminated sediments.

"Farm Bureau thanks Congressman Sweeney for supporting the use of sound science when addressing the ecological and environmental needs of this state," said John W. Lincoln,

president of New York Farm Bureau. "With the NAS study being concluded in September, it is a short amount of time to wait to ensure that factual data is presented to the residents of the Hudson Valley."

The proposed dredging of the Hudson River could involve the removal of 1.5 to 2 million cubic yards of sediment and could take between 15 and 20 years to complete. The sediment to be removed would more than likely be relocated on the fields of dairy farmers in the area. With insufficient data to back the successfulness of this project, EPA is continuing to raise doubts in the public's eye regarding their decision-making process.

"Sound science is the way to go," said Lincoln. "We are grateful for Congressman Sweeney's initiative to stand up for the farmers in his district that would be severely impacted by this quick and politically-based decision."

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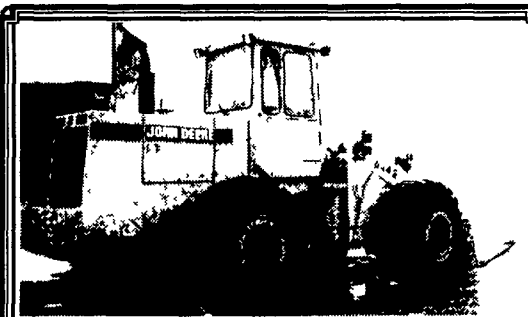
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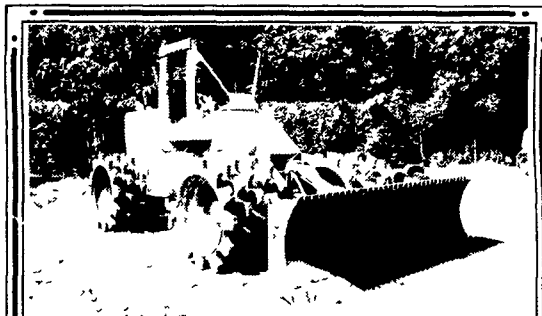
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