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USDA DESIGNATES COUNTIES IN MISSISSIPPI AS AGRICULTURAL DISASTER AREAS

Decision Allows Farmers and Ranchers to Apply for USDA Assistance

WASHINGTON, Sept. 9, 2005 - Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns today designated 31 counties in Mississippi as primary agricultural disaster areas, making certain farmers, ranchers and other agricultural producers in the counties eligible for low-interest emergency loans from USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA).

"I'm pleased that USDA can offer assistance to farmers and ranchers who have sustained losses from Hurricane Katrina," said Johanns. "This agriculture disaster designation will enable eligible producers to apply for low-interest emergency loans from USDA to help cover their losses. This announcement is a part of our commitment to help farmers and ranchers to rebuild their operations."

As a result of the major disaster declared a for the State of Mississippi on Aug. 29 by President George W. Bush due to Hurricane Katrina, 47 of 82 counties in Mississippi were already eligible for all available assistance for which a Presidential or Secretarial primary natural disaster designation would require. USDA has reviewed documentation for the remaining 35 Mississippi counties and determined that 31 of them have sustained sufficient production losses to warrant a disaster designation. The remaining four counties are eligible as contiguous counties, resulting in eligibility across the entire State of Mississippi.

The following counties were today designated as primary agricultural disaster areas:

Benton	Grenada	Monroe	Tallahatchie
Bolivar	Holmes	Montgomery	Tate
Calhoun	Humphreys	Panola	Tunica
Carroll	Issaquena	Pontotoc	Union
Chickasaw	Itawamba	Prentiss	Washington
Clay	Lafayette	Quitman	Webster
Coahoma	Leflore	Sharkey	Yalobusha
De Soto	Marshall	Sunflower	

Counties eligible because they are contiguous to those listed above are:

Alcorn Lee Tippah Tishomingo

The counties listed above were designated agricultural disaster areas, making all qualified farm operators eligible for emergency loans, provided eligibility requirements are met. Farmers in eligible

counties have eight months from the date of the declaration to apply

USDA has also made other programs available to assist farmers and ranchers, including the Emergency Conservation Program, Federal Crop Insurance and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program.

Interested farmers may contact their local USDA Service Centers for further information on eligibility requirements and application procedures for these and other programs. Additional information is also available online at: <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov>.

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