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With planting season virtually complete in Kansas, one might assume that the urgency of farming will slow down substantially for awhile. However, there never really seems to be a slow time for crop producers during the season. That's true in the field and it's also true this year in the office.

Producers need to consider several programs and deadlines in the coming days and weeks, ranging from commodity programs to disaster programs to conservation programs and more.

USDA Programs

Commodity Programs. The Farm Bill sign-up should be complete, as the final deadline for this year's sign-up passed just last week on June 2. However, producers will need to visit their Farm Service Agency (FSA) office in the coming weeks to certify acreage for the commodity programs. While acreage certification was not mandatory under the 1996 Farm Bill, it is an annual requirement to participate in the commodity support programs authorized by the 2002 Farm Bill.

Disaster Programs. Almost as soon as the Farm Bill sign-up was completed, the disaster program sign-up began at local FSA offices. Remember that there are two basic disaster programs for which producers will apply this summer. The Crop Disaster Program sign-up began June 6. The Livestock Assistance Program is expected to begin sign-up in July. Further information is available at the FSA disaster assistance website:

disaster.fsa.usda.gov/

Conservation Programs. The current general sign-

up period for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) was extended from its original May 30 deadline to June 13. Remember as this new deadline expires on Friday, producers can always enroll certain high-priority lands in the CRP through the continuous sign-up provisions. The FSA website on the CRP is:

www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/cepd/crp.htm

Another program, the Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP), was recently announced by USDA. The first sign-up for this program is slated to begin June 16. Remember that this first sign-up is limited to four specific targeted areas in the country, including the lesser prairie-chicken habitat that stretches into 14 counties in southwest Kansas.

Remember that information on several USDA commodity, conservation, and disaster programs is available in the policy section of AgManager at agmanager.info. And of course, more information on all USDA programs is available from the various agencies of USDA or on the USDA's main website at www.usda.gov.

Other Issues

Starlink Settlement. Producers also face an extended deadline if they wish to file claims in the Non-StarLink Farmer's Class Action Settlement. ***This is a completely separate matter and is not related in any way to farm programs and sign-up procedures at local USDA offices.*** This settlement addresses a class action lawsuit in which growers of non-StarLink corn sought damages related to the StarLink incident in the Fall of 2000.

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The settlement deadline was originally set as May 31, but has been extended to July 31 for producers to file their proof of claims. The website for settlement and claim information is:

www.non-starlinkfarmerssettlement.com

Don Uchtman, an agricultural law specialist at the University of Illinois, also has a website that provides a good explanation of the settlement and the claim procedures. That website is:

www.farmdoc.uiuc.edu/legal/starlink_related_table.html