



Louisiana Conservation and Commodity Updates

October 2020; Issue-10

Farmworker Wage Rates

National Agricultural Statistics Service will no longer collect farmworker wage rate data and will not publish the farm labor report planned initially for Nov 2020. The Agriculture Labor Survey provides quarterly statistics on the number of agricultural workers, hours worked, and wage rates. This information is used to estimate agricultural productivity, administer the H2-A program, and set adverse effect wage rates. USDA argues that the same information is available from other sources; whereas, some say that not collecting this information can impact wage rates for domestic and foreign farm workers.

EPA promotes Sustainable Practices

EPA has signed agreements with Maryland and Pennsylvania to promote sustainable practices in watersheds located in the Chesapeake Bay by providing funding directly to the state agriculture departments. Similar agreements were signed by the EPA with Delaware and West Virginia, and has plans to sign one with Virginia.

NRCS-Louisiana offering paid Internships

NRCS Louisiana is offering several paid summer internships beginning in Summer 2021 through the Pathways Program. The internships provide an opportunity to work side-by-side with NRCS professionals. The following video explains the process. <https://youtu.be/3KXHeiDqJns>.

Correction: Updated Federal Regulations from USDA, EPA, and USACE.

The USDA added and revised definitions related to *wetland determinations* concerning Farmed Wetland, Farmed Wetland Pasture, and Prior Converted Cropland to provide clarity to the program participants. Also, USDA delivers clarity on how wetlands are delineated, determined, and certified.

The EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers (within the Navigable Waters Protection Rule) recently developed their own definition of *Prior Converted Cropland* (PC). They retained the PC exclusion under the Clean Water

Act as long as the PC is not abandoned and remains in agricultural use. The agencies clarified the PC criteria within this Rule and cited several examples. This change is particularly relevant to Louisiana stakeholders because it is easily understandable when a PC would and would not be under the Clean Water Act's jurisdiction.

Note: John Pitre and Troy Mallach of NRCS-Louisiana contribute to the above text.

Agriculture Intelligence Measures Act

A bill introduced by Sen. Tom Cotton and Rep. Rick Crawford proposes establishing the Office of Intelligence in the USDA to address activities such as mystery seeds that showed up in the mail and any other that threaten United States agriculture by foreign countries. USDA has been investigating the source of those seeds.

Funds For Coastal Monitoring Program

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (RESTORE Council) awarded \$15 million to the CPRA, which will use the funds to extend the System Wide Assessment and Monitoring Program (SWAMP) to southwest coastal parishes. The SWAMP's extension will add to the existing Coastwide Reference Monitoring System (CRMS) and Barrier Island Comprehensive Monitoring (BICM) programs. These long-term monitoring programs will ensure a comprehensive data collection network for coastal protection and restoration in Louisiana.

Payments to Farmers Amidst the Pandemic

As an expansion of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), the USDA implements CFAP2 for farmers who are continuously facing market disruptions and other additional costs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) started accepting the application for CFAP2 from Sept 21, 2020, and the application deadline is Dec 11, 2020. USDA estimates that the payments will total about \$13 billion. The first round of CFAP distributed about \$10.2 billion of the originally budgeted \$16 billion. Some of

the commodities eligible for CFAP2 payments are row crops, dairy and livestock, broilers and eggs, aquaculture, floriculture and nursery crops, and tobacco. Readers can find a complete list of commodities eligible for CFAP payments at the USDA website: <https://www.farmers.gov/cfap>

REMINDER!

- The signup period for Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for the 2021 crop year opened Tuesday, Oct 13, and will close on Mar 15, 2021.
- Friday, Oct 30, 2020, is the deadline to submit applications for the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program – Plus (WHIP+) for 2018 and 2019 losses.

WASDE Update

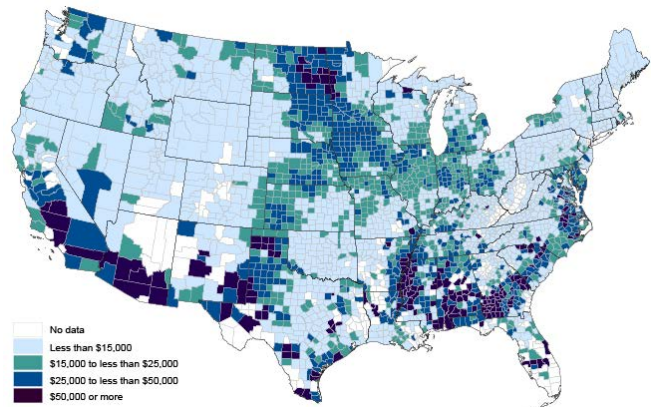
On Friday, Oct 9, the USDA released its updated WASDE report. October's U.S. corn outlook is for lower production, reduced corn used for ethanol and feed and residual use, and smaller ending stocks. Corn production was reduced by 178 million bushels than September, and lower beginning stocks have led to a decrease in supplies compared to last month. Corn price has been increasing since August and has raised 10 cents to \$3.60 per bushel than the September report, which can mostly be explained by the decrease in supply. Compared to last month, soybean production has slightly decreased, but the exports have increased to 75 million bushels on record early-season. With smaller supplies and increased exports, ending stocks are projected at 290 million bushels, down 170 million from last month. Season-average soybean price for 2020/21 reflects lower supplies and higher exports. The price is forecasted at \$9.80 per bushel, 55 cents up from

September. Estimates show that cotton production has slightly decreased than last month, and the 2020/21 U.S. season-average price is forecasted at 61.0 cents per pound.

EPA Decision on Dicamba

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is expected to announce their decision if farmers can use dicamba-based products for the next planting season. As discussions continue, producers may be unwilling to risk purchasing the weed killer. In such cases, farmers may consider alternatives such as 2,4-D. Producers would regard it as a viable substitute since it proved comparably effective against dozens of tough weeds. Meanwhile, suppose the EPA rules against dicamba, Bayer plans to compensate farmers who bought its dicamba products, including as much as \$7 off each unit of some soybean seeds and \$40 off each unit of certain cotton seeds resistant to the herbicide.

GAO Reports on 2019 MFP Payments



The U.S Government Accountability Office recently released a report that reviewed the 2019 Market Facilitation program. As of Aug 31, 2020, the USDA has made \$14.495 billion in payments and \$23.1 billion since 2018. According to the report, cotton, sorghum, and soybeans fared favorably under the program.

Questions and comments:

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