



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE
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COMMISSIONER

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Agriculture Commissioner Spell Announces Additional Hurricane Aid For MS Agriculture Livestock Producers

Mississippi Commissioner of Agriculture Lester Spell was notified on January 25th by the office of United States Secretary of Agriculture, Mike Johanns, that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) would be including approximately \$30 million for livestock feed assistance to farmers and ranchers with 2005 hurricane related expenses. Since Hurricane Katrina in late August, Spell has regularly communicated with USDA officials in Washington, D.C. to recommend programs that will benefit Mississippi agriculture and forestry producers.

Commissioner Spell said, "Initially there were no plans to release funds to help offset livestock feed costs associated with the hurricanes. However, USDA has responded in a very positive way to my written request for funds specifically designated for farmers and ranchers who have had unusually high livestock feeding costs. This action by USDA is appreciated and shows that they have been sensitive to our request on behalf of storm victims. I especially thank Governor Barbour and members of our state's congressional delegation for their leadership and successful efforts in obtaining unprecedented amounts of federal funding to help our state during these recovery efforts."

On January 26, USDA announced the availability of \$1.2 billion in hurricane disaster aid to be allocated to producers in six states. Payments will be administered through eight separate programs.

The following five programs will be administered by the USDA – Farm Service Agency and funded with \$250 million provided by USDA.

- Hurricane Indemnity Program – will provide payments to farmers who received crop insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) payments as a result of hurricanes.
- Tree Indemnity Program – will provide per acre payments for replanting and rehabilitation of perennial orchards, vines, and bushes that produce annual crops that were damaged by 2005 hurricanes.
- Feed Indemnity Program – will provide payments to livestock producers for hurricane-caused feed losses.
- Livestock Indemnity Program – will provide payments to livestock producers, including poultry growers, who lost livestock as a direct result of 2005 hurricanes.
- Aquaculture Grants – will provide grants to states for aquaculture losses associated with 2005 hurricanes.

The following three programs are funded by the 2006 Defense Bill with over \$900 million.

- Emergency Conservation Program – existing program will be expanded to include nursery, forest landowners, and poultry producers to provide assistance with clean up costs. Additionally, poultry growers who suffered uninsured losses to poultry houses may qualify for assistance up to 50% of the total costs associated with restoration of houses. The Farm Service Agency will administer this program.
- Emergency Forestry Conservation Reserve Program – will provide payments to qualifying landowners who suffered merchantable timber losses. The Farm Service Agency will administer this program.
- Emergency Watershed Protection Program – will provide assistance to landowners for the removal of downed timber and for the disposal of debris and animal carcasses. The Natural Resources Conservation Service will administer the program.

Spell urges all farmers and landowners in Mississippi with hurricane related losses to seek qualifications through local USDA-Farm Service Agency offices or visiting www.usda.gov for more information.