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E. De la Garza

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news release

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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DE LA GARZA URGES PROMPT DELIVERY OF DISASTER ASSISTANCE

For immediate release, January 12, 1990

(PR90-006)

WASHINGTON -- House Agriculture Committee Chairman E (Kika) de la Garza, D-Tex., Thursday praised the quick response of the president in declaring four counties in South Texas a disaster area due to the Christmas-time freeze, and pledged to closely monitor the delivery of assistance to determine whether additional measures are needed to help the area recover.

"I am pleased the President has responded quickly to the dire situation facing farmers, farmworkers, and rural businesses in our area because of the freeze. The Presidential Disaster Declaration issued January 10 makes available a variety of assistance programs, in addition to the assistance provided by the Disaster Assistance Act of 1989, to help South Texas agriculture and the thousands of workers dependent on it survive this unfortunate setback," Rep. de la Garza said.

"I intend to monitor the delivery of assistance to the people in our area to ensure claims are processed as quickly as possible and to determine if additional measures are needed. I had previously urged the Department of Agriculture to resolve questions of eligibility in the favor of affected producers and I will closely monitor USDA's handling of such issues in our area," Rep. de la Garza said.

Rep. de la Garza said farmers and rural business owners affected by the freeze should visit their county ASCS or FmHA offices to obtain additional information on their eligibility or to obtain the necessary application forms.

Rep. de la Garza released the following information supplied to him by the U.S. Department of Agriculture detailing how the agency intends to implement the major disaster assistance programs available to freeze-affected agricultural producers and rural businesses:

Crop Disaster Payments -- Cash payments will be made to eligible producers of 1989 nonprogram crops on a farm having at least a 50 percent loss of production due to the freeze. Signup ends March 31, 1990. Other eligibility guidelines include:

-- Program crops planted in 1989 for harvest in 1990 are considered 1990 crops and are not covered. However, these crops are eligible for failed acreage credit.

-- For nonprogram crops, disaster payments equal to 65 percent of the market price are made on the loss of production greater than 50 percent of the expected production.

Tree Replanting Assistance -- Eligible commercial tree growers who experienced tree losses in 1989 due to freeze may qualify for cost-share reimbursement payments to help with removal of dead

(more)

trees, site preparation, and stand reestablishment. Qualifying losses must exceed 45 percent in addition to normal mortality. Cost-sharing for the replanting of seedlings will be provided at the 65 percent level for that portion of the loss that exceeds 45 percent plus normal mortality. Other eligibility criteria:

-- Only trees or seedlings planted to produce annual crops intended to be sold commercially such as fruit, nuts, or syrup are eligible.

-- Eligible participants must own not more than 500 acres of trees planted for annual crops.

-- Payments for freeze losses are limited to \$25,000 per person.

-- Signup at local county ASCS offices ends June 30, 1990.

Emergency Livestock Assistance -- Emergency feed assistance is available for the preservation and maintenance of livestock to eligible livestock owners who, because of natural disaster (i.e. drought, freeze, or flood), suffered substantial loss of livestock feed production normally produced on the owner's holdings. Specific programs include:

-- Emergency Feed Program (EFP) pays eligible owners part of the cost of feed purchased to replace that which is normally produced on the farm.

-- Emergency Feed Assistance Program (EFAP) makes CCC feed grains available for purchase by the owners at 50 percent of the local market price.

-- ASCS can provide cost-share assistance for the burning of prickly pear cactus for livestock feed.

Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) Emergency Loans -- FmHA low-interest loans are available to qualified, family farm operators who suffered a qualifying physical or production loss of at least 30 percent in a single enterprise of the total farming operation in areas covered by a disaster declaration. Applicants must be unable to obtain credit elsewhere and will be required to obtain crop insurance coverage for the 1990 crop in most instances. Application deadline is September 10, 1990.

Disaster Loans for Rural Businesses -- FmHA has available a guaranteed loan assistance program for eligible rural businesses located in communities with populations of 50,000 or less to alleviate the distress caused by drought, freeze and other weather-related conditions in 1988 or 1989.

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