February 28 Crop Insurance Deadline For Arkansas Row Crop Farmers

PINE BLUFF, ARK.

February 28 is the deadline for Arkansas row crop producers to make all crop insurance decisions. They must decide whether or not they want crop insurance, which crops to insure, levels of coverage and which units to use for their operations.

The February 28 deadline applies to growers of corn, cotton, soybeans, rice, grain sorghum and peanuts. Even though fresh market tomatoes are not a row crop, Arkansas tomato growers can purchase crop insurance and must make similar decisions, but they have until March 15 to do so, says Dr. Henry English, small farm project director at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB).

"To cancel crop insurance, farmers must notify their crop insurance agent in writing by February 28," says Dr. English. But if farmers want to keep their current level of coverage, they can do nothing and it will rollover.

With an early beginning to the severe weather season and changing weather patterns, farmers should not be considering canceling their insurance; in fact, the opposite is true, says Dr. English. Farmers should take advantage of crop insurance to minimize farming risks. Besides not having crop insurance, other common mistakes which can end up costing producers money are underreporting planted acreage per unit, over reporting planted average per unit, failure to report all farm serial numbers (FSNs) planted to the insured crop, failure to report the production for all farm serial numbers, failure to elect "new producers" status or indicate added land on their acreage report, says Dr English.

In addition to avoiding the above common pitfalls, Dr. English offers these other crop insurance tips.

Coverage level – The 65 percent to 75 percent coverage level is generally the best for Actual Production History (APH) insurance or Crop Revenue Coverage (CRC).

Price Election – The maximum price election is generally the best choice. If you have a loss, you want to be paid as much as possible.

Unit Structure – Use as many optional units as possible. If you have a loss, you are more likely to trigger an indemnity with optional units than with basic or enterprise units.

Low Average Yields – Make sure your agent looks at using yield plugs and the yield floor when calculating your yield guarantees.

Short or No Yield History – Consider buying Group Risk Protection (GRP) or Group Risk Income Protection (GRIP) with the harvest revenue option, combining it with crop hail insurance while you establish a longer yield history.

Small, limited resource or family farmers may be exempt from certain administrative fees, says Dr. English, but limited resource status differs depending upon the county in which a farmer resides.

To check if you qualify as a limited resource farmer, or for help in deciding which type of crop insurance and which unit would benefit you most, visit your crop insurance agent or contract one of the following Extension associates:

- Arlanda Jacobs (870) 572-2966 – Lee, Phillips, St. Francis, Arkansas and Monroe counties
- Carolyn Prowell (870) 489-5585 – St. Francis, Crittenden, Woodruff and Cross counties;
- Janet Breckenridge (870) 489-2336 – Chicot, Drew, Ashley and Desha counties;
- Kandi Williams (870) 774-0446 – Howard, Little River, Miller, Hempstead and Lafayette counties;
- Precious Williams (870) 774-0446 – Clark, Columbia, Nevada, Ouachita, Pike and Sevier counties; and
- Stephan Walker (870) 575-7237 – Jefferson, Desha, Lincoln and Pulaski counties. Those elsewhere in the state can contact Dr. English at (870) 575-7246. Δ