

Wanted: Farmers To Look At The New ACRE Program



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SARA WYANT

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Remember all of those predictions about how the new Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) program would attract hundreds of thousands of farmers and potentially be a budget-buster? During the 2008 Farm Bill debate, one USDA analysis suggested that the

program would be so attractive that the department would pay out around \$16 billion just to corn, wheat and soybean farmers in 2009 alone. But thus far, only 1,426 producers have signed on the dotted line, ranging from a "whopping" 372 in Nebraska to one in Texas. (See state by state numbers, below.) Little wonder that advocates are looking for new ways to promote this innovative new program and also find ways to avoid what may be a last minute rush prior to the August 14th signup deadline.

"I think (ACRE) will grow," Ron Litterer, National Corn Growers Association Chairman recently told a House Agriculture Subcommittee. "But let me remind the subcommittee that ACRE enrollment didn't begin until April 27, right in the middle of planting season. A lot of farmers haven't had the opportunity" to study ACRE. Originally the sign-up deadline was back in June, but because of the time needed to implement the program, the deadline was pushed back to Aug. 14.

Holding off on the decision to participate may be a good thing for producers because it provides more time to assess the latest market prices and how the specific crops in their state and farm are doing. But if all of those folks wait until the last week, local FSA offices could be overwhelmed and unable to process all of the paperwork.

In anticipation of possible work load issues in county offices, Litterer proposed a modification in sign up procedures that makes a lot of sense. He suggested enabling producers and landowners interested in ACRE to file an "Intention" to Elect and Enroll into ACRE now and pull the trigger later.

"This declaration of an intention would encourage producers and landowners to visit their local FSA Offices now and complete all the required paperwork well in advance of the August 14th deadline. If producers and landowners do not notify the FSA Office that they want to continue with ACRE, their ACRE election and enrollment would revert to DCP (Direct and counter-cyclical program). By allowing producers to make a final decision on ACRE after submitting the initial enrollment documents, the signup process would have already been completed thereby alleviating long waiting lines at the FSA county office," he explained.

Farmers tell me they still have a boatload of questions when it comes to ACRE and they don't always feel confident that local Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices have all of the answers. But I expect USDA to push out a lot more information in the next few weeks. In the meantime, there are plenty of resources available from USDA, NCGA and many university Extension offices. Here are just a few resources:

http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/acrebkgrd.pdf

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=dccp&topic=landig>

<http://ncga.com/acre-resource-center>

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/polk/farm-management.htm>

<http://www.agmanager.info/>

<http://aede.osu.edu/people/publications.php?user=zulauf.1> Δ

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