



United States Department of Agriculture

Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services  
Risk Management Agency

**BULLETIN NO.: MGR-02-010**

TO: All Reinsured Companies  
All Risk Management Agency Field Offices  
All Other Interested Parties

FROM: Ross J. Davidson, Jr. /s/ *Ross J. Davidson, Jr.* 6/12/02  
Administrator

SUBJECT: Extension of RMA Summerfallow Date in Montana

**ISSUE:**

Drought conditions in certain Montana counties are resulting in severe soil erosion necessitating the need to allow plant growth beyond the current summer fallow deadline.

**BACKGROUND:**

Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC) summerfallow practice requires termination of plant growth, followed by a continuous chemical and/or mechanical weed control program for the rest of the crop year. Control of plant growth allows for the storage of moisture to be used by crops planted the following year. The deadline for termination of plant growth in Montana is June 15, 2002. Dryland producers not terminating plant growth by this date would not qualify for a summerfallow practice for the 2003 crop year.

The ongoing drought in northcentral Montana has caused severe soil erosion in numerous Montana counties. In an attempt to deter wind erosion, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has issued recommendations to producers in affected counties to not disturb existing soil surfaces, plants, and plant residue. In addition, NRCS has identified eleven Montana counties (Blaine, Cascade, Chouteau, Fergus, Hill, Judith Basin, Liberty, Phillips, Pondera, Teton and Toole) as priority areas for drought assistance.

NRCS has recommended producers in affected counties immediately establish or maintain ground cover to protect the soil and lessen or prevent dust storms or excessive soil erosion. Recent moisture has made planting a cover crop feasible. NRCS also recommends existing crop stands that will not be carried to harvest be maintained to control erosion. NRCS has stated that chemical burn down by June 15 could result in the premature breakdown of the vegetative



1400 Independence Ave., SW • STOP 0801 • Washington, DC 20250-0801

The Risk Management Agency Administers and Oversees  
All Programs Authorized Under the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation

An Equal Opportunity Employer

matter, thereby not providing any residual cover to hold the topsoil in place. In the counties that are currently experiencing severe wind erosion, following the summerfallow requirement of terminating plant growth by the existing summerfallow date would significantly increase the danger of blowing topsoil.

University studies have been conducted to measure the changes in soil properties due to soil erosion and the effect these changes have on yields. Trials conducted on major soil types demonstrated that the changes in topsoil properties that had the greatest impact on yields were clay and organic matter content. Yields decreased as the clay content increased and organic carbon content decreased. Results from these studies illustrate that the quality of a soil deteriorates with soil erosion; consequently, crop yields will decline. The Risk Management Agency (RMA) is concerned that heavy soil erosion will severely impact the soil's productivity level for the future, and ultimately result in increased program risk because the soil will no longer have the capability to produce the yields used to establish the actual production history (APH).

So as not to penalize producers who follow NRCS recommended practices for controlling soil erosion and do not disturb the soil, existing plants, or plant residue by the June 15, 2002, summerfallow deadline, the RMA Administrator has decided to extend this deadline to July 15, 2002, in the counties designated by NRCS as priority areas for drought assistance. This extended summerfallow deadline will be effective for the NRCS program cover crop plantings as well.

**ACTION:**

In accordance with part 2, section 6, paragraph 39.c. of the Loss Adjustment Manual that requires that summerfallow practices be carried out consistent with NRCS soil erosion control measures, the deadline for summerfallow operations is extended to July 15, 2002, for select Montana counties. These counties are Blaine, Cascade, Chouteau, Fergus, Hill, Judith Basin, Liberty, Phillips, Pondera, Teton and Toole. The extension will be effective for land qualifying under the summerfallow practice in accordance with the Crop Insurance Handbook and includes such land planted to a cover crop by June 15, 2002. All plant growth must be terminated by a continuous chemical weed control program by July 15, 2002, for the acreage to be considered summerfallow.

The disposal date of this bulletin is December 31, 2002.