

Additional House Agriculture Subcommittee Report language:

Staffing Levels.—The Committee remains concerned about staffing shortages at FSA offices and continues to direct the Secretary to submit a report to Congress with an administrative breakdown of allotment levels by State, current full-time equivalents, current on-board permanent employees by State, and funded ceiling levels by State.

National Agriculture Imagery Program.—The Committee recognizes the importance of the National Agriculture Imagery Program and encourages FSA, when acquiring future products, to include commercial satellite imagery and data, in addition to aerial imagery, as part of its portfolio to ensure comprehensive coverage while increasing cost-effectiveness and efficiency. The Committee encourages FSA to include program updates and current activities in future budget justifications.

Supporting Beginning Farmers and Ranchers.—The Committee recognizes that the average age of U.S. farmers continues to increase and a majority of the Nation’s farmland will change hands in the coming years due to the aging farmer population. It is clear that the ability of the next generation of farmers to produce food and fiber in a sustainable way is critical to the economy, health, and security of our Nation and rural communities. In order to address this concern, USDA must find new ways to meet the unique needs and barriers facing beginning farmers and ranchers, especially diversified operations, minority and indigenous farmers and ranchers, and returning military veterans. The Committee has heard repeated complaints that USDA programs, particularly the direct and guaranteed loan programs and microloans, can be difficult for small or beginning farmers to apply for. Those challenges are further exacerbated when local USDA staff lack an understanding about non-traditional operations. Therefore, the Committee encourages the Secretary to prioritize training and education for State and county FSA, NRCS, and RMA staff on how to better serve and support young and beginning farmers and ranchers to ensure that they can enter and sustain farming or ranching as a viable livelihood.

Farm Production and Conservation Business Center. Business Center Report.—The FPAC Business Center was created by the Secretary in 2018 with the goal of consolidating administrative functions within the newly created FPAC mission area, with assurances given that this would lead to reduced inefficiencies and increased customer service. However, the Committee is aware of reports of prolonged delays in filling critical vacancies that has led to delays in the deployment of important disaster assistance, conservation, and commodity programs. The Committee once again reminds FPAC that the detailed report required by S. Rpt. 116–110, which was due February 2021, regarding the FPAC Business Center’s efficiencies gained, metrics, hiring plan, and potential reorganization, is now long overdue.

Geographically Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers.—The Committee supports the Reimbursement Transportation Cost Payment Program for Geographically Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (RTCP). The Committee directs FSA, within 180 days after the enactment

of this Act, to provide a report on the RTCP. The report should be by county and include the number of producers participating, the amount claimed, the factored payment for FY 2020, and any recommendations to improve the program.

Benefits of Conservation and Soil Health Practices.—The Committee notes that the environmental benefits of participating in voluntary conservation practices such as those administered by the Farm Service Agency and the Natural Resources Conservation Service have been studied but the long-term economic dividends of these practices are not well understood and may not be readily apparent to those who are eligible and considering enrollment. The Committee directs ERS to produce a study on the relationship between conservation and soil health practices, farm financial health, and crop yield variability rates. The Committee notes that the fiscal year 2021 House report directed ERS to produce a study on the relationship between conservation and soil health practices as they relate to the long-term profitability of farms and crop yield variability rates and the Committee looks forward to reviewing the results of the study

Organic Certification Cost Share Program.—The Committee recognizes the important role of the Organic Certification Cost Share Program for small and mid-size farms, underserved farmers, and new organic farmers. The Committee is concerned that FSA cut 2020 reimbursement levels due to accounting errors and it directs FSA to report back to the Committee with an explanation of how this accounting error happened. The Committee notes USDA recently announced up to \$20 million in additional organic cost share assistance, including for producers who are transitioning to organic and encourages USDA to restore the full reimbursement levels of 75 percent of annual organic certification costs, including the restoration of prior years.

Small Farmer Specialists.—The Committee recognizes COVID 19, climate change, and trade wars/agreements have impeded small farmer growth. The Committee remains concerned that a majority of financial and technical assistance goes to larger farmers and encourages USDA to hire dedicated regionally focused small farmer specialists that can enhance outreach and assistance to small farmers on federal programs, conservation practices, contract opportunities, and other valuable issues to help our small farmers regain their economic footing.

Language regarding Disaster programs included in the Senate Appropriations Bill:

SEC. 773. For an additional amount for the “Office of the Secretary”, \$7,030,000,000, which shall remain available until December 31, 2023, for necessary expenses related to losses of crops (including milk, on-farm stored commodities, crops prevented from planting in 2020 and 2021, and harvested adulterated wine grapes), trees, bushes, and vines, as a consequence of droughts, wildfires, hurricanes, floods, derechos, winter storms, smoke exposure, quality losses of crops, and excessive moisture occurring in calendar years 2020 and 2021 under such terms and conditions as determined by the Secretary: Provided, That losses due to drought shall only be eligible under this section if any area within the county in which the loss occurs was rated by the U.S. Drought Monitor as having a D3 (Extreme Drought) or higher level of drought intensity during the applicable calendar years: Provided further,

That of the amounts provided in this section, the Secretary shall use \$750,000,000 to provide assistance to producers of livestock, as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture, for losses incurred during calendar year 2021 due to drought or wildfires: Provided further, That at the election of a processor eligible for a loan under section 156 of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (7 U.S.C. 7272) or a cooperative processor of dairy, the Secretary shall make payments for losses in 2021 to such processors (to be paid to producer members, as determined by such processors) in lieu of payments to producers and under the same terms and conditions as payments made to processors pursuant to Title I of the Additional Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Act, 2019 (Public Law 116–20) under the heading ‘‘Department of Agriculture—Agricultural Programs—Processing, Research and Marketing—Office of the Secretary’’, as last amended by section 791(c) of title VII of division B of the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (Public Law 116–94): Provided further, That notwithstanding section 760.1503(j) of title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations, in the event that a processor described in the preceding proviso does not elect to receive payments under such clause, the Secretary shall make direct payments to producers under this section:

Provided further, That of the amounts provided in this section, not more than \$20,000,000 may be used for administrative costs to carry out this section: Provided further, That the total amount of payments received under this section and applicable policies of crop insurance under the Federal Crop Insurance Act (7 U.S.C. 1501 et seq.) or the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) under section 196 of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (7 U.S.C. 7333) shall not exceed 90 percent of the loss as determined by the Secretary: Provided further, That the total amount of payments received under this section for producers who did not obtain a policy or plan of insurance for an insurable commodity for the applicable crop year under the Federal Crop Insurance Act (7 U.S.C. 1501 et seq.) for the crop incurring the losses or did not file the required paperwork and pay the service fee by the applicable State filing deadline for a noninsurable commodity for the applicable crop year under NAP for the crop incurring the losses shall not exceed 70 percent of the loss as determined by the Secretary: Provided further, That producers receiving payments under this section, as determined by the Secretary, shall be required to purchase crop insurance where crop insurance is available for the next two available crop years and producers receiving payments under this section shall be required to purchase coverage under NAP where crop insurance is not available in the next two available crop years, as determined by the Secretary: Provided further, That not later than 120 days after the end of fiscal year 2021, the Secretary shall submit a report to the Congress specifying the type, amount, and method of such assistance by state and territory: Provided further, That such amount is designated by the Congress as being for an emergency requirement pursuant to section 4112(a) of H. Con. Res. 8 71 (115th Congress), the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2018, and to section 251(b) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985.