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**SIGN UP FOR CROP INSURANCE BY MARCH 16 TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR
DISASTER ASSISTANCE IN 2009**

Federal Subsidy Available to Farmers Who Combine Insurance Units

HARRISBURG – Pennsylvania producers who want to be eligible for disaster assistance in 2009 must have crop insurance coverage on most insurable spring-planted crops before March 16, said Agriculture Secretary Dennis Wolff today.

“For the first time, most crops must be covered by a crop insurance program to be eligible to receive federal disaster payments,” said Wolff. “I urge all Pennsylvania farmers to contact a crop insurance agent well before the March 16 deadline to discuss how they can protect their investments from disasters, providing peace-of-mind even in these difficult economic times.”

Insurable spring crops include corn; dry beans; fresh market sweet corn; fresh market tomatoes; grain sorghum; green peas; oats; potatoes; processing beans, sweet corn and tomatoes; soybeans; spring forage seeding; and tobacco.

Only eligible spring-planted crops enrolled in a crop insurance policy will be protected under the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program, or SURE, for 2009.

If producers missed prior crop insurance deadlines for crops like perennials, wheat or barley, AGR-Lite is available as a whole revenue farm insurance that would make them eligible for SURE payments. The deadline for AGR-Lite is March 16.

If insurance coverage is not available on a crop and producers want to be eligible for disaster assistance, they must sign up for non-insured assistance program coverage, or NAP, from the Farm Service Agency. The deadline for NAP is April 1.

Producers insuring more than 50 acres of corn or soybeans under a crop revenue coverage plan, or CRC, may be able to combine their existing insurance units into “enterprise units” to receive up to an 80 percent federal subsidy. Enterprise units may reduce the cost of traditional coverage and allow producers to purchase insurance at higher coverage levels.

The higher the level of crop insurance, the greater the guarantees will be for the policy and disaster protection.

Producers should contact their local crop insurance agent well before March 16 to purchase insurance or make changes to existing policies. A list of agents can be found at www3.rma.usda.gov/apps/agents.

For more information on Pennsylvania’s crop insurance program, call 717-705-9511 or visit www.agriculture.state.pa.us/cropinsurance.

