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October 9, 2015

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

As the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) continues to implement the Agriculture Act of 2014 (2014 Farm Bill), I have heard concerns with the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs.

Producers expect predictable risk management and planning tools as well as certainty from their government as they look toward financial commitments and other operating decisions for the 2016 crop year. As we move further into the month of October producers are concerned with the timeliness of ARC and PLC payments. The 2014 Farm Bill stipulates that for each program “payments shall be made beginning October 1, or as soon as practicable thereafter, after the end of the applicable marketing year for the covered commodity.” The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has yet to announce or begin processing payments to producers for either ARC or PLC.

When will FSA begin processing and releasing 2014 crop year ARC and PLC payments to eligible producers? Additionally, how long will it take for all of the appropriate benefits, respectively to be released by FSA?

After the 2014 Farm Bill was signed into law on February 7, 2014, producers faced multiple steps to officially enroll into the ARC and PLC programs. Owners of farms had a one-time opportunity to update program yields and the option to either maintain the farm’s 2013 base acres or reallocate base acres among those covered commodities planted on the farm.

Additionally, all producers and owners with a share of production had until April 7, 2015 to make a one-time and irrevocable election of PLC, ARC County, or ARC Individual. Finally, producers that elected into the programs had until September 30, 2015, to enroll their farm by signing a contract at their local FSA office in order to receive program benefits.

I appreciate the work that FSA has taken to implement the 2014 Farm Bill and note that more than 1.76 million producers have elected to participate in these programs.

I look forward to your reply and appreciate your continued work on behalf of farmers and ranchers across the country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Pat Roberts", is written over a horizontal line.

Pat Roberts, Chairman
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry