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USDA and Congress Seek to Help Farmers Affected by Summer 2012 Drought (/full-blog/2012/10/usda-and-congress-seek-to-help-farmers.html)

"2012 drought" (/full-blog?category=%222012+drought%22), "Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2012" (/full-blog?category=%22Federal+Agriculture+Reform+and+Risk+Management+Act+of+2012%22), "United States Department of Agriculture" (/full-blog?category=%22United+States+Department+of+Agriculture%22)



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Image Source (http://grist.files.wordpress.com/2012/07/farmer_drought.jpg)

By: Clay Duncan, Staff Member

Almost 40% of the United States, as of August 2012, was affected by "severe to extreme drought," according to the National Climatic Data Center.[1] It should come as no surprise that those feeling the greatest sting from these conditions are the farmers who rely upon weather that is favorable to crop growth for their livelihood. Realizing this, the United States Department of Agriculture and Congress are providing relief programs and seeking to pass laws that will extend some programs that have recently expired.[2]

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 authorized substantial funding for agricultural disaster relief programs; however, these programs are now expired.[3] In an attempt to bridge the gap after expiration of the 2008 Act, Congress is currently pushing legislation to extend these relief efforts.[4] The Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act of 2012, passed by the Senate in June of 2012, seeks to extend previously enacted programs and thereby provide coverage to some farmers suffering from the recent drought.[5] Similarly, the House of Representatives passed the Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2012 the following month, which includes the same programs found in the Senate bill. [6] Also, the United States Department of Agriculture currently provides Emergency Farm Loans of up to \$500,000 to producers hard-hit by disasters for the purpose of restoring or replacing necessary equipment as well as covering costs incurred in the disaster year, among other things.[7]

It remains to be seen whether Congress and the USDA will make the necessary relief accessible to the agricultural producers in order to mitigate the harsh consequences of the drought. Otherwise, individual farmers could face crippling losses that will have far-reaching effects on the United States food supply. (<http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383>)

[1] *National Drought Overview*, NATIONAL CLIMATIC DATA CENTER (Sept. 25, 2012, 10:30 P.M), <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/drought/#national-overview> (<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/drought/#national-overview>).

[2] See Dennis A. Shields, *Agricultural Disaster Assistance*, AGRICULTURAL LEGISLATION (Aug. 27, 2012), http://agriculture-legislation.blogspot.com/2012/08/agricultural-disaster-assistance_27.html?m=1 (http://agriculture-legislation.blogspot.com/2012/08/agricultural-disaster-assistance_27.html?m=1).

[3] *Id.*

[4] *Id.*

[5] *Id.*

[6] *Id.*

[7] *Emergency Farm Loans*, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=fmlp&topic=efl> (<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=fmlp&topic=efl>).

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