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OKLAHOMA CITY RO: USDA Expands Hybrid Seed Rice Insurance to Include Climate-Smart Furrow Irrigation and Intermittent Flooding Practices

News Release |
Oklahoma City, OK
|
November 15, 2023
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OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla., Nov. 15, 2023 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is expanding the Hybrid Seed Rice crop insurance program in Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas to now provide coverage for rice grown in furrow irrigated or intermittent flooded fields. USDA’s Risk Management Agency (RMA) is updating this insurance option beginning in crop year 2024 for 25 counties in these states, recognizing these farming practices are popular among rice producers, use less water and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

“These two relatively new methods of cultivation have grown in popularity because of their many benefits, and they play a crucial role in how we can support climate-smart agriculture through Federal crop insurance,” said James Bellmon, RMA Oklahoma City Regional Office Director. “We are always looking for ways to support climate-smart agriculture and furrow irrigation and intermittent flood irrigation practices are more efficient than the flood irrigation practice in protecting the environment by significantly reducing water usage.”

Previously, the Hybrid Seed Rice program was limited to the flood irrigation practice, through with a producer maintains an even layer of water on the field for the entire season. The expansion will now cover:

- Furrow irrigation, which consists of small channels – or furrows – dug between the rows to carry water to the crop.
- Intermittent flooding (also called alternate wetting and drying), which consists of flooding a field to a reasonable depth and allowing the flood to naturally subside to the soil surface via infiltration and evapotranspiration.

This change to Hybrid Seed Rice will provide coverage for more acres as well as will enable rice producers to choose the most appropriate irrigation practices for their farming operations.

Hybrid Seed Rice is a pilot program that provides yield-based dollar plan of coverage for producing rice seed stock. The program has been in operation since the 2016 crop year in 25 counties in Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas.

Currently, rice producers have insured 11,868 acres in Hybrid Seed Rice, covering \$29,352,069 in liabilities.

Conservation and Crop Insurance

In recent years, RMA has increased its support of conservation by encourage producers to use climate-smart practices, including conserving water and inputs and planting cover crops. This improvement to Hybrid Rice Seed builds on other recent efforts, including premium benefits to plant cover crops through the Pandemic Cover Crop Program and coverage for producers who split apply nutrients. This improvement to Hybrid Rice Seed also aligns with efforts by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), which have added furrow irrigation and intermittent flooding to their options for rice farming operations. [Learn more on RMA's Conservation and Crop Insurance webpage.](#)

More Information

The next sales closing date is **February 28, 2024.**

Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the [RMA Agent Locator](#). Learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at rma.usda.gov or by contacting your [RMA Regional Office](#).

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit usda.gov.

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