

MGR-22-001

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Date

January 20, 2022

To

All Approved Insurance Providers

All Risk Management Agency Field Offices

All Other Interested Parties

From

Marcia Bunker, Administrator /s/ Marcia Bunker

Subject

COVID-19 Relief

Background

The Risk Management Agency (RMA) issued Manager's Bulletins to provide program flexibilities recognizing the potential impact and challenges due to COVID-19.

Previously issued Manager's Bulletins providing COVID-19 relief continue to apply through the effective dates as provided.

RMA remains committed to providing program flexibility that supports the health and safety of all parties while also ensuring the Federal crop insurance program continues to serve as a vital risk management tool. Therefore, additional relief is being authorized to provide program flexibilities for our insurance delivery partners and producers.

Action

Relief is authorized for all policies, regardless of crop year, with program requirements due from January 16, 2022 through June 30, 2022, unless otherwise specified in the relief below.

Electronic Notification and Signature Relief for Sales Closing (SCD), Production Reporting (PRD), and Acreage Reporting (ARD) Deadlines:

Notifications may be sent electronically between the policyholder and their Approved Insurance Provider (AIP)/agent. Policyholders may provide policy-related information over the phone or by electronic methods to select policy elections by SCD, PRD, and ARD. Policyholders and AIP/agents should retain appropriate documentation of the call or electronic communication. This authority also extends to options, endorsements, and other forms with SCD, PRD, or ARD deadlines.

If the policyholder sends their reports in such a manner, they will be required to either sign digitally at the time of their report submission or follow up with a properly signed form(s) no later than 60 calendar days after the initial reporting deadline provided in the actuarial documents. The policyholder agrees to be bound by their initial certification and cannot make changes, other than those authorized by RMA procedure, after the applicable deadline.

Producer Submission Deadlines for Written Agreement Requests:

In accordance with Section 18(e)(1) of the Common Crop Insurance Policy, Basic Provisions, producers may be able to submit a request for a written agreement after the SCD (but on or before the ARD), if they are able to demonstrate the physical inability, including self-certification of COVID-19 related issues. Producers must submit the written agreement extension request (and any required additional documentation) on or before the SCD.

Producer Signature Deadline for Written Agreement Offers:

If a written agreement offer is provided to the producer, but the producer fails to sign the offer by the expiration date identified on the offer, the producer's signature after the expiration date may still be accepted.

If the signature and date are executed after the expiration date of the written agreement offer, the producer must provide a self-certification, or other documentation, showing that COVID-19 caused a physical inability to sign the offer by the expiration date. This self-certification, or other documentation, must include a brief explanation of the circumstances surrounding the situation (such as, producer was quarantined, etc.) and must be included with the signed and accepted written agreement offer when returned to RMA.

Only written agreement offers issued by RMA for the 2022 crop year (2023 crop year for citrus) on or before June 30, 2022, with an expiration date on or before July 30, 2022, allow producer signatures to be accepted after the expiration date with proper self-certification or documentation. All documentation and signatures for these offers must be completed no later than August 1, 2022. In lieu of paragraphs 54 and 56 of the 2022 Written Agreement Handbook (WAH), written agreement offers signed after the expiration date due to COVID-19 must be electronically submitted to RMA through the Regional Office Exception system no later than 15 business days after the producer signed the written agreement offer.

Any written agreement offers with an expiration date after July 30, 2022, must be signed by the expiration date identified in the written agreement offer and follow the procedures provided in the 2022 Written Agreement Handbook (WAH) for submission to RMA.

If a written agreement offer is issued requiring a crop inspection per paragraph 42 of the 2022 WAH, the crop inspection is subject to the same submission dates required for the written agreement offer (that is, a crop inspection must be submitted no later than 15 business days after a written agreement offer is signed by the producer after the expiration date due to COVID-19), unless RMA specifies otherwise in the written agreement offer.

AIP Submission Deadlines for Category B Determined Yield and Master Yield Requests:

AIPs are allowed additional time to accept Regional Office (RO) Determined Yield, Master Yield, and Irrigated Determined Yield requests for Category B (annual) crops. The completed requests can be accepted by the AIP by the earlier of the ARD or applicable deadline plus 30 calendar days. Requests required to be submitted to RMA for review must be submitted to the RO no later than the earlier of the ARD or applicable deadline plus 30 calendar days. For example, a RO Determined Yield request must be completed and submitted to the RO no later than 20 calendar days after the PRD; however, with this relief, the request could be accepted by the AIP and submitted to the RO by the earlier of the ARD or 50 calendar days after the applicable PRD.

AIP Submission Deadlines for Category C Determined Yield and Pre-Acceptance Inspection Reports (PAIRs):

If, due to COVID-19 impacts, additional time is needed for submission of Category C

(perennial) crop(s) RO Determined Yield requests, AIPs can request an additional 30-day extension from deadlines specified in the 2022 CIH paragraph 2212, and for PAIRs, CIH paragraph 1840.

The request for extension must be submitted to the applicable RO and include documentation or self-certification of the physical inability to meet the established deadlines due to COVID-19. RO Underwriting Guidelines may be issued for subsequent COVID-19 relief, as warranted.

Assignment of Indemnity (Assignments):

AIPs are authorized to waive the witness signature requirement for approval of Assignments. The policyholder's and creditor's signatures continue to be required. Pen-and-ink signatures must be in the handwriting of the person whose signature is required. Electronic (digital) signatures must be in accordance with the AIPs established Electronic Business Implementation Plan and requirements in the Document and Supplemental Standards Handbook.

Since the witness requirement is waived, AIPs must obtain and maintain documentation for proof of debt or other pecuniary obligation before an Assignment is accepted.

DISPOSAL DATE:

December 31, 2022