USDA Farm Bill Implementation Progress Update

(Washington, D.C., August 1, 2019)—U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue today announced the Department’s third update on the implementation status of the 2018 Farm Bill. President Trump signed this Farm Bill into law on December 20, 2018, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) promptly began implementing key programs. In addition, USDA held several listening sessions with stakeholders and the public specific to each agency’s respective mission areas.

Implementation Progress:
TITLE I – Commodity Programs

- **Margin Protection Program for Dairy (MPP-Dairy):**
  - Dairy producers who elected to participate in the Livestock Gross Margin for Dairy Cattle Program in 2018 were able to retroactively participate in the MPP-Dairy for 2018. This enrollment opportunity ended on May 10, with almost $8 million dollars paid out to assist producers through this retroactive coverage as of July 15, 2019.
  - Farm Service Agency (FSA) began offering reimbursements to eligible producers for MPP-Dairy premiums paid between 2014-2017 on May 8, 2019. As of July 15, more than $9.3 million in cash refunds have been paid to dairy producers.

- **Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC):**
  - USDA is now making payments under the new DMC program, which replaced the Margin Protection Program for Dairy (MPP-Dairy). As of July 16, more than $110 million has been paid to enrolled dairy operations. Dairy producers can enroll through September 20, 2019.

- **Dairy Product Donation:**
  - On June 12, 2019, the rulemaking to implement the program began review by the Office of Management and Budget.

TITLE II – Conservation

- **Emergency Conservation Program (ECP):** The ECP Final Rule published in the Federal Register on July 10, 2019. The ECP helps farmers and ranchers to repair damage to farmlands caused by natural disasters and to help put in place methods for water conservation during severe drought. The ECP does this by giving ranchers and farmers funding and assistance to repair the damaged farmland or to install methods for water conservation.

- **Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program (FSCP):** On June 20, 2019, USDA announced $75 million in funding for the eradication and control of feral swine through the FSCP in a joint effort between NRCS and APHIS. Applications are being accepted through August 19, 2019, for partners to carry out activities as part of these pilot projects in select areas of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Texas.

TITLE VI – Rural Development

- **Interagency Task Force on Rural Water Quality:** The Rural Utility Service hosted the kick-off meeting on July 10, at the USDA Whitten Building.

- **Council on Rural Community Innovation and Economic Development:** Rural Development held a meeting with support from the Office of Science Technology Policy on July 10, at the White House.

TITLE VII – Research, Extension, and Related Matters

- **Farm and Stress Assistance Network:** NIFA published the Request for Applications for this program on June 25th.
• Scholarships for Students at 1890 Universities: On May 29th, NIFA held a listening section to solicit stakeholder feedback.

TITLE VIII – Forestry

• Good Neighbor Authority (GNA):
  o On July 10, 2019, the Forest Service distributed internal direction and templates to implement the additional opportunities under the GNA for states, counties and tribes. GNA allows the USDA Forest Service to enter into agreements with states, counties and tribes to do the critical management work to keep our forests healthy and productive.
  o On July 12, 2019, Forest Service hosted a webinar, “Empowering Local Forest Service Officials to Successfully Implement the Good Neighbor Authority.” The training was for line officers, timber staff officers, interdisciplinary team leaders, and others providing leadership for GNA partnership agreements. A second webinar for Agency employees was held on July 24, 2019.

• Agreement to Implement Tribal Authorities. On July 11, 2019 the Forest Service signed an agreement with the Intertribal Timber Council (ITC), a national tribal consortium dedicated to improving the management of natural resources of importance to Native American communities. Under this agreement, the parties will implement new tribal authorities in the 2018 Farm Bill and other legislation, including collaborating to prioritize National Forest System areas and tribal communities at risk, and craft Tribal Forest Protection Act (TFPA) projects to address those risks. ITC will also help implement the new Forest Service authority for self-governance contracting under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act and the TFPA.

TITLE X – Horticulture

• Hemp: On June 27, 2019, the rulemaking to implement the program began review by the Office of Management and Budget.

• Hemp: On April 24, 2019, AMS announced that the Plant Variety Protection Office will begin accepting applications for seed-propagated hemp for plant variety protection. AMS published the proposed rulemaking in the Federal Register on July 12, 2019.

• Specialty Crop Block Grant: On July 23, 2019, the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) signed a cooperative agreement with an educational and research organization to facilitate the engagement of and meetings with stakeholders to gather feedback on existing Specialty Crop Block Grant program performance measures, as well as recommendations for new standardized measures and program improvements.

TITLE XI – Crop Insurance

• Catastrophic Risk Protection Endorsement (CAT); Area Risk Protection Insurance Regulations; and Common Crop Insurance Policy Basic Provisions. The Risk Management Agency (RMA) published a final rule in the Federal Register on June 28, 2019. The rule raises the fee to $655 for policies with catastrophic coverage only, puts yield cups (APH declines of more than 10% can be ‘cupped’ at 10%) within the policy, updates native sod to 2018 rules, and puts Veteran Farmer or Rancher in the policy.

• Additional Flexibility for Cover Crop Management: FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and RMA issued new guidelines on June 28, 2019, adding more flexibility to when cover crops must be terminated while remaining eligible for crop insurance. As a result, beginning in Crop Year 2020, cover crop management practices will now be considered a good farming practice.

TITLE XII – Miscellaneous

• Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers: On July 16, 2019, USDA announced up to $16 million in available funding to eligible program applicants to help support socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers own and operate successful farms. The deadline for applications on Grants.Gov is August 15, 2019.