

the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Authority for ARS research is derived from the Department of Agriculture Organic Act of 1862 (7 U.S.C. 2201), which established the Department of Agriculture. The scope of USDA's agricultural research programs has been expanded and extended many times since the Department was first created. Today ARS has a workforce of approximately 8,000 employees including 2,000 scientists representing a wide range of disciplines. ARS conducts 1,200 research projects at over 100 locations across the country and at four overseas laboratories. The National Agricultural Library and the National Arboretum are also part of ARS.

ARS conducts research to develop and transfer solutions to agricultural problems of high national priority and provides information access and dissemination to (1) Ensure high-quality, safe food and other agricultural products, (2) assess the nutritional needs of Americans, (3) sustain a competitive agricultural economy, (4) enhance the natural resource base and the environment, and (5) provide economic opportunities for rural citizens, communities, and society as a whole.

To achieve these objectives, ARS research projects are divided into National Programs. Currently, ARS research is organized into 22 National Programs which are described in detail on the ARS Web site at <http://www.nps.ars.usda.gov/>. ARS also works to ensure the timely transfer of new knowledge and technologies to potential users. ARS seeks to broaden public understanding of the value of agriculture and agricultural research to ensure the continued primacy of the U.S. agriculture in the 21st century. Program direction related specifically to food safety programs can be found at <http://www.nps.ars.usda.gov/programs/programs.htm?NPNUMBER=108>.

Done in Washington, DC, this 11th day of June, 2003.

Joseph J. Jen,

Under Secretary, Research, Education, and Economics.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Federal Crop Insurance Corporation

Request for Applications (RFA): Community Outreach and Assistance Partnership Program

ACTION: Announcement of availability of funds and request for applications for

the Community Outreach and Assistance Partnership Program.

SUMMARY: In accordance with section 522(d) of the Federal Crop Insurance Act (Act), the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC), operating through the Risk Management Agency (RMA), announces the availability of up to approximately \$3.5 million in fiscal year (FY) 2003 for collaborative outreach and assistance programs for women, limited resource, socially disadvantaged and other traditionally under-served farmers and ranchers, who produce agricultural commodities covered by the noninsured crop disaster assistance program (7 U.S.C. 7333); specialty crops; and under served commodities (For purposes of this announcement, these commodities are collectively referred to as "Priority Commodities"). Awards under this program will be made on a competitive basis for projects of up to one year. Recipients of awards must demonstrate non-financial benefits from a partnership agreement and must agree to the substantial involvement of RMA in the project. This announcement lists the information needed to submit an application under this program.

Closing Dates: The closing date and time for receipt of applications under this RFA is 5 p.m. Eastern Time on August 1, 2003. Applications received after the deadline will not be evaluated by the technical review panel.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact: Marie Buchanan, National Outreach Program Manager, Telephone (202) 690-2686, Facsimile (202) 690-1518, E-mail: Marie.Buchanan@usda.gov. You may also obtain additional information regarding this announcement from the RMA Web site at <http://www.rma.usda.gov>. Applicants may download an application package for the community outreach and assistance partnership program from the Risk Management Agency (RMA) Web site at: <http://www.rma.usda.gov>. Applicants may also request an application package from: Marie Buchanan, USDA RMA, Community Outreach and Assistance Program, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Room 6709, Stop 0805, Washington, DC 20250-0805. Telephone (202) 690-2686, Facsimile (202) 690-1518, E-mail: Marie.Buchanan@usda.gov.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed and signed application packages using overnight mail or delivery service to ensure timely receipt by the USDA. The applicable address for such submissions is: USDA-

RMA, Community Outreach and Assistance Programs, c/o Marie Buchanan, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Room 6709, Stop 0805, Washington, DC 20250-0805.

Completed and signed application packages sent via the U.S. Postal Service must also be sent to the above address. Applicants using the U.S. Postal Service should allow for extra security-processing time for mail delivered to government offices.

Paperwork Reduction Act

Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, as amended (44 U.S.C. chapter 25), the collection of information requirements contained in this announcement have been approved under OMB Document Nos. 0348-0043, 0348-0044, and 0348-0046 and 0348-0040.

The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number for these programs is 10.450.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This announcement consists of six parts:

Part I. General Information

- A. Legislative Authority
- B. Background
- C. Project Goal
- D. Purpose
- E. Definition of Priority Commodities

Part II. Eligibility/Funding

- A. Eligible Applicants
- B. Non-financial Benefits
- C. Project Period
- D. Availability of Funds and Amounts

Part III. Program Description

- A. Recipient Activities
- B. RMA Activities
- C. Other Activities

Part IV—Preparation of an Application

- A. Program Application Materials
- B. Content of Applications
- C. Submission of Applications
- D. Acknowledgement of Applications

Part V—Review Process

- A. General
- B. Evaluation Criteria and Weights
- C. Confidentiality

Part VI—Additional Information

- A. Requirement to Use Program Logo
- B. Requirement to Provide Project Information to an RMA representative
- C. Private Crop Insurance Organizations and Potential Conflicts of Interest
- D. Access to Panel Review Information
- E. Notification of Partnership Agreement Awards
- F. Confidential Aspects of Proposals and Awards
- G. Reporting Requirements
- H. Audit Requirements
- I. Prohibitions and Requirements with Regard to Lobbying
- J. Applicable OMB Circulars