

## 4/10/2003 Moran Subcommittee Reviews Farm Bill and Disaster Assistance Implementation

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Moran Chairs First Agriculture Subcommittee Hearing

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Jerry Moran, Chairman of the House Agriculture Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management, convened his first hearing today to review the implementation of the "Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002" and the "Agricultural Assistance Act of 2003."

"The combination of farm bill implementation and disaster assistance has created questions from farmers and ranchers and greatly increased the workload for USDA," Moran said. "This is a good time to review the ongoing implementation of the farm bill and disaster assistance."

The 2002 farm bill made several changes to agricultural policy, particularly in the commodity title. The commodity programs continue the fixed direct payment and marketing loans for grains, cotton and oilseeds. A new counter-cyclical assistance program was also implemented.

The lead witness in today's hearing was Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services (FFAS), J. B. Penn. Also included in the panel were the Administrators from the Farm Service Agency, Risk Management Agency and the Foreign Agricultural Service.

Testifying before the subcommittee, Under Secretary Penn said, "The complicated mainstay of the legislation -the Direct Payments and Counter-Cyclical Payments Program - is now in place with benefits available to producers...we are pleased with the progress and manner in which this new law has been implemented."

In his testimony, Under Secretary Penn also discussed the distribution of disaster assistance, approved by Congress in February, which will provide assistance to producers in areas struggling from multiple years of drought. Under Secretary Penn highlighted efforts by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to ensure efficient and timely delivery of assistance to producers. Foremost among these efforts was the launching of a new website which gives producers a single location to access information, find answers to frequently asked questions and submit suggestions.

"Today's hearing was a good opportunity to hear first-hand about the USDA's efforts to serve the American farmer," Moran said. "I appreciate their work to see that our farmers and ranchers are able to continue to serve our nation's food needs."

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