

3/27/2007 Moran Asks Ag Committee to Investigate Farm Service Agency Shortfalls

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Computer System Delays Causing Significant Problems

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Jerry Moran today asked the House Agriculture Committee to examine problems at the Farm Service Agency (FSA), including an ineffective computer system and delays farmers are experiencing when signing up for Direct and Counter-cyclical Programs (DCP). Moran asked Chairman Collin Peterson to conduct a hearing to investigate the situation and begin finding ways to resolve it.

"For many months, farmers and ranchers across Kansas have informed me of the antiquated and inept computer system used by FSA," Moran said. "In one FSA office in Kansas, the staff must shut down all of the computers in the office to download a single form onto the system. Not only does this delay producer sign-ups, but it is a waste of staff time and taxpayer dollars. I am worried that the problems farmers and ranchers are experiencing today are just the beginning and that without significant technology changes, a catastrophic computer collapse will occur."

On Friday, FSA had to extend the DCP sign-up deadline due to problems with the computer system. The delay in DCP sign-ups is also being caused by extensive FSA paperwork reviews of all farm operations. The reviews were ordered after audit findings showed 11 percent of FSA payments were improper. However, about 91 percent of the improper payments were attributable to paperwork errors.

"While the government should be held accountable and every effort should be made to correct paperwork errors, forcing unnecessary audits that delay DCP sign-ups and payments to producers who are in compliance is unjustified," Moran said.

Action by the House Agriculture Committee also comes at an important time as FSA is in the process of consolidating county offices. FSA is telling farmers and ranchers that consolidation will not adversely affect them because they can complete the paperwork online. This has not been the case, however, because the computer system cannot even handle current in-office use.

Moran is a senior member of the House Committee on Agriculture.

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