

PCG Disappointed in Vilsack's Decision Regarding Cottonseed Program

Friday, February 5, 2016

By Mary Jane Buerkle

Cotton growers, industry leaders, and supporters of the industry's request to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack were disappointed on Wednesday when Vilsack said that he did not have the legal authority to designate cottonseed as an "other oilseed" under the 2014 Farm Bill.

Vilsack's remarks initially came following a speech to the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture in Washington, DC, according to media reports. Later that day, Vilsack sent a letter, which confirmed those remarks, to House Agriculture Committee Chairman Mike Conaway.

"After close examination of applicable law, we have determined that such a designation is not authorized under the Agricultural Act of 2014 (2014 Farm Bill) because it expressly removed eligibility of cotton for such payments, as cotton is no longer listed as a 'covered commodity' under section 1111," Vilsack said in the letter. "Specific elements of the 2014 Farm Bill and related legislative history, when taken together, clearly show that USDA lacks the authority to designate cottonseed as an 'other oilseed.'"

The complete letter, which further details Vilsack's reasoning, is at <http://bit.ly/VilsacktoConawayCottonseed>.

Conaway wrote a letter to Vilsack on Friday.

"Congress does in fact clearly vest that authority with you," Conaway said in the letter. "... Nothing about the novelty of the situation nullifies your authority to address it.

"... You have the authority and the responsibility to act, and I respectfully renew my request for you to do so," Conaway said.

The complete letter from Conaway to Vilsack can be found at <http://bit.ly/ConawaytoVilsackCottonseed>.

In a blog post Wednesday, DTN Ag Policy Editor Chris Clayton noted that the 2014 Farm Bill clearly points out what authority the Agriculture Secretary has and does not have.

"I'm no attorney ... But I do know how to search mind-numbing federal language," Clayton wrote. "... So I opened my copy of the Agricultural Act of 2014 and searched 'oilseed.' From my non-legal background, all I can tell you is that there are multiple provisions highlighting the secretary's potential to designate other oilseeds for farm programs.

"... Call me an Internet lawyer, but I think Conaway and the cotton industry might have a case on this one," Clayton said in the blog.

The full blog can be read at <http://bit.ly/ChrisClaytonBlog>.

The National Cotton Council and Plains Cotton Growers both swiftly responded to Vilsack's declaration on Wednesday.

"We continue to believe that the current Farm Bill allows for this authority for USDA, and many Members of Congress share that belief," PCG President Shawn Holladay said. "This designation would be a tremendous boost for cotton growers across the Cotton Belt who are struggling with low prices, high

input costs, weak demand, and growing competition from foreign producers who are heavily subsidized, and it would help give us some stability as we go into financing the 2016 crop."

Holladay acknowledged Secretary Vilsack's understanding of the cotton industry's situation, and said that PCG would continue to work with him and the USDA to help growers facing these challenges.

PCG commended everyone who helped advocate on behalf of the industry, including HAC Chairman Conaway, HAC Vice Chairman Randy Neugebauer, and the numerous Congressional Representatives, Senators, organizations, chambers of commerce, businesses, banks, and individuals who contacted Secretary Vilsack and urged him to make the designation.

"We made a strong case and had a significant amount of support," Holladay said. "I can assure you that Plains Cotton Growers will leave no stone unturned when it comes to finding or creating opportunities to help cotton producers in these challenging times, and will keep working to find a solution."

The NCC expressed the same sentiment.

"Our industry remains committed to pursuing a cottonseed designation and policy to help provide long-term stability to the industry," the NCC said in their news release. "To help address the current economic climate, we will continue working with Congress and USDA to find ways to help address the significant challenges facing the U.S. cotton industry."

Save the Date!

PCG's 59th Annual Meeting Friday, April 8

Lubbock Memorial Civic Center • 9 a.m.-Noon

Keynote Speaker: David Wasserman
The Cook Political Report

NCC Praises Efforts to Reinstate Commodity Marketing Certificates

Thursday, February 4, 2016 From the National Cotton Council
USDA announced the implementation and availability of commodity marketing certificates as part of the Marketing Loan Program (MLP) available to all loan eligible commodities.

There is a long history of certificates being available as part of the MLP to ensure the program functions as intended, allowing commodities to continue to flow to the marketplace and end users, and to prevent the forfeiture of commodities to USDA. In periods of depressed commodity prices, the MLP cannot function as intended to provide a minimum level of price stability to producers.

The National Cotton Council (NCC), on behalf of the U.S. cotton industry, strongly commends House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Aderholt (R-AL), House Agriculture Committee Chairman Conaway (R-TX),

("COTTON NEWS" continued on Page 2)

Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Cochran (R-MS) and Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Moran (R-KS) for all of their efforts to ensure this provision was included in the FY16 Agriculture Appropriations bill, providing USDA the authority to again make available marketing certificates for the redemption of loan commodities.

In addition, the NCC thanks Agriculture Secretary Vilsack and his team at USDA that have worked since late December to develop the necessary regulations and provisions to implement this critically important provision. The cotton industry is encouraged to see this functionality and effectiveness restored to the MLP.

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Texas Cotton Ginners Annual Meeting and Trade Show Set for April 7-8 in Lubbock

Friday, February 5, 2016 By Tony Williams for Cotton Farming

Optimism is running high in Texas as cotton farmers and ginners prepare for the 2016 season. To help kick off the year on a positive note, The Texas Cotton Ginners Association invites you to join us at our 109th Annual Meeting and Trade Show in Lubbock on April 7-8.

Our theme for the event is “Rock Cotton Texas Style” with the goal of getting everyone involved in the excitement about cotton that is spreading across the state, beginning with this year’s show. We’ve started a new hashtag — #RockCottonTexasStyle — that you can use on Tweets, Facebook, Instagram or other social media to share information about the Annual Meeting and Trade Show or express your passion for cotton in the great state of Texas and beyond.

Our show is the largest gathering of cotton gin equipment manufacturers and other businesses that provide parts or services to the ginning industry. Visitors from all regions of the Cotton Belt and around the world attend the show to learn about the latest developments in cotton ginning and purchase equipment or services they need at their gins.

2016 has enormous potential for the Texas cotton industry. Many farmers indicate that they will plant cotton this year in spite of the price. I am excited about our opportunity to make good yields of high-quality cotton fiber in Texas in 2016, which, I believe, will be attractive to mills, both domestically and abroad.

Ginners across Texas faced challenges last year with the arrival of El Niño in the fall, followed by a “Goliath winter storm,” which made harvest and ginning laborious and costly. However, our resilient ginning industry is ready to move forward in preparation for what we hope will be record runs in 2016.

As the show week begins, full-time gin employees can gain additional knowledge and see the latest industry developments by attending the Southwest Ginners School.

The school is conducted at the USDA-ARS South Plains Ginning Laboratory north of Lubbock and is a collaborative effort of the National Cotton Ginners’ Association, USDA-ARS, regional ginner associations and gin equipment manufacturers and industry suppliers.

TCGA also will be hosting its annual golf tournament at Meadowbrook Golf Course on Wednesday, April 6. This event typically draws a large crowd of golfers who enjoy a relaxing day of friendly competition and visiting with friends.

The trade show starts at 9 a.m., on Thursday, April 7, and is held at the Lubbock Civic Center where more than 130 exhibitors will be on hand to inform you about their products or services. The day’s show concludes with a “Taste of Lubbock Party” that is open to all show attendees.

On Friday, show hours are from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. During this time, Plains Cotton Growers Inc. also holds its Annual Meeting. The day concludes with TCGA’s Awards Dinner and Vegas Night Celebration at the Overton Hotel. Tickets for the dinner may be purchased at the show registration booth. Everyone is invited to the Vegas Night Celebration following the dinner, and no ticket is required.

For more information, visit <http://www.tcg.org>.

Upcoming Area Ag Conferences

February 9 – Hale/Swisher County Crops Conference, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., Ollie Liner Center, Plainview. 5 CEUs. Contact Jason Miller, Hale CEA-AG, at 806-291-5267 or John Villalba, Swisher CEA-AG, at 806-995-3721.

THIS
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 HAS
 A VOICE.

Times have changed since Plains Cotton Growers began in 1956, but no matter the circumstance, our mission remains the same: to promote and protect the interests of Plains cotton producers.

It takes all of us working together to ensure that cotton stays strong. We’re a team, from seed to shirt. And if you’re reading this, you’re on cotton’s team, whether you’re growing it, ginning it, storing it, selling it, or buying it.

**Be informed.
 Be connected.
 Be a part of something
 bigger for cotton.**

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Editor’s Note:

“Cotton News”, a weekly service of Plains Cotton Growers to the cotton industry and news media in the 41-county High Plains area, is mailed from Lubbock each Friday. Its contents are confined to news items and comments pertaining to the High Plains cotton industry which is so vital to us all. Anyone interested in making comments about the contents of this column can call 806-792-4904 or Email PCG at: editor@plainscotton.org