

## **PCG Hosts Annual Meeting, Elects Officers and Executive Committee at Board Meeting**

Friday, April 12, 2019

By Mary Jane Buerkle

More than 250 cotton growers, ginners, industry leaders, and others interested in cotton attended PCG's 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting last Friday at the Lubbock Memorial Civic Center.

Attendees heard from food and science journalist Tamar Haspel, who challenged the audience to reconsider how they consume and respond to issues for debate, whether it's in person or on social media, and to allow the opportunity for a change in perspective. Dr. Gary Adams, President and CEO of the National Cotton Council updated the group on the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol, an integrated data collection, measurement and verification procedure that will document U.S. cotton production practices and their environmental impact.

Sen. John Cornyn discussed several issues in Washington, DC, with the audience, and PCG recognized the Senator for his work among his fellow Senators to ensure cotton's restoration to Title 1 of the 2014 Farm Bill. Berrye Worsham, President and CEO of Cotton Incorporated, gave a presentation with several videos and graphics demonstrating their efforts in marketing to consumers.

Tony St. James with All Ag, All Day recorded the meeting on video, available at <http://www.facebook.com/allagallday> or at <http://www.facebook.com/plainscottongrowers>.

Stacy Smith of New Home was re-elected PCG president for 2019-2020 during PCG's quarterly Board of Directors meeting after the Annual Meeting. Joining Smith on the PCG officer team are Brent Nelson of Sudan, re-elected vice president; and, Martin Stoerner of Lockney, re-elected secretary-treasurer of the 41-county cotton producer organization. The immediate past president, Johnnie Reed of Kress, serves as chairman of the board.

Each year the PCG Board also elects a total of nine directors, three from each of the organization's three districts, to serve on the Executive Committee alongside the organization's three elected officers and two most recent past presidents.

Members elected to the 2019-2020 PCG Executive Committee are: District 1 representatives Brent Coker of Springlake, Barry Evans of Kress, and Jon Jones of Floydada; District 2 representatives David Carter of Levelland, Scott Harmon of Idalou, and Travis Mires of O'Donnell; District 3 representatives Jeremy Brown of Lamesa, Carl Pepper of Borden County, and Johnny Ray Todd of Lamesa; President Stacy Smith of New Home, Vice President Brent Nelson of Sudan, Secretary-Treasurer Martin Stoerner of Lockney, Board Chairman Johnnie Reed of Kress, and Past President Shawn Holladay of Lamesa.

### **Upcoming Area Auxin Trainings**

Complete list at [plainscotton.org](http://plainscotton.org)

## **USDA Update on Farm Bill Implementation Progress**

Friday, April 12, 2019

From USDA

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue today announced the implementation status of the 2018 Farm Bill. President Trump signed this Farm Bill into law on December 20th, 2018 and the U.S. Department of Agriculture promptly began implementation of key programs. USDA held several listening sessions with stakeholders and the public, specific to each agency's respective mission areas.

"At USDA we are implementing the 2018 Farm Bill as quickly as possible. We know the programs that are renewed and updated in this farm bill are critical to farmers, ranchers, and producers as they plan for the future," said Secretary Sonny Perdue. "Our mission areas have all held several public listening sessions, both formally and informally, to receive stakeholder input. Our goal is to have programs that function best for the people that we serve. We have made progress in new Farm Bill provisions, and look to implement programs that are customer service focused and economically efficient. We still have a lot of work ahead of us, but we are diligently working on behalf of all of USDA's customers."

Implementation Progress (**PCG EDITOR'S NOTE: Due to space, we are listing only selected items of progress. This is NOT an exhaustive list. A complete list can be found at <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAO/bulletins/23de2cd>**)

### **TITLE I – Commodity Programs**

- Emergency Conservation Program (ECP): On April 4, 2019, FSA announced several changes to ECP as provided by the 2018 Farm Bill, including increasing the payment limit from \$200,000 per person or legal entity per natural event to \$500,000.

- On April 4, 2019, FSA announced that socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers or ranchers are now eligible for up to 90 percent ECP cost share of their total allowable cost.

- Noninsurance Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP): On April 8, 2019, FSA announced that producers now have a one-time opportunity until May 24, 2019, to obtain buy-up coverage for 2019 or 2020 eligible crops for which the NAP application closing date has passed. In addition, qualified military veteran farmers and ranchers are now eligible for a service fee waiver and premium reduction.

- Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL): On April 10, 2019, FSA announced the 2019 Marketing Assistance Loan rates for wheat, feed grains, oilseeds, rice and pulse crops. Relative to 2018-crop MAL levels, the 2018 Farm Bill increased the national loan rates for most of these commodities for each of the 2019-2023 crops.

- Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) Programs: FSA will open ARC/PLC elections for the 2019 and 2020 crop years beginning in September 2019.

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**TITLE II – Conservation**

- Conservation Innovation Grants: On March 26, 2019, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) state offices began publishing notices of funding availability for the Conservation Innovation Grants state competitions.
- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program: On March 27, USDA published an announcement regarding the availability of \$450 million for wetland and agricultural land easements that will help private landowners, tribes, land trusts and other groups wanting to restore and protect critical wetlands and protect agricultural lands and grasslands.
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP): On April 5, 2019, NRCS announced the next deadline for CSP applications to be raked and considered for funding this year is May 10, 2019. It includes higher payments for enhancements that include cover crops, resource conserving crop rotations, and advanced grazing.
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP): On April 9, 2019, NRCS determined that RCPP projects with agreements entered into prior to September 30, 2018, may continue to enter into new RCPP-CSP contracts with eligible producers, which will be administered under the new CSP authority.
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program: This program operates through a continuous signup process. Applications may be submitted throughout the year. At the state level, NRCS has periodic funding cutoff periods when applications are evaluated for selection.

**TITLE III – Trade**

- Agricultural Trade Promotion and Facilitation Funding: On February 7, 2019, the Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS) allocated more than \$204 million in Market Access Program and Foreign Market and Development Program.

**TITLE V – Credit**

- Modified Micro Loan Limits: On March 7, 2019, FSA implemented a change to allow agricultural producers to receive both a \$50,000 Direct Operating Microloan and a \$50,000 Direct Farm Ownership Microloan. Previously, agricultural producers were limited to a combined total of \$50,000.
- Increase in Percent of Guarantee for Beginning and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers: On March 7, 2019, FSA increased the percent for new guaranteed loans to any beginning or socially disadvantaged agricultural producer to 95 percent.
- Increased Loan Limits: On April 11, 2019, FSA announced that eligible agricultural producers have access to higher loan amounts, to better provide them with the credit needed during this period of lower market prices and numerous natural disasters.

**TITLE VII – Research and Related Matters**

- Matching Fund Requirements: On March 20, 2019, National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) published the updated matching requirements chart on its website, sent an update to all stakeholders via the weekly NIFA Stakeholder Update. Relevant future RFA's will include updated matching requirements.
- Indirect Cost Limitations: On March 20, 2019, NIFA published the updated indirect cost rate requirements by program chart on its website. Relevant future Requests for Applications (RFA's) will include updated indirect cost rate requirements.

- The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP): On April 5, 2019, NIFA published the Request for Applications (RFA) for BFRDP.
- Nominations of Members: On March 28, 2019, the Request for Nominations of Members for the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board, Specialty Crop Committee, Citrus Disease Subcommittee, and National Genetic Resources Advisory Council published in the Federal Register.

**TITLE XI – Crop Insurance**

- Specialty Crop Insurance: On March 6, 2019, Risk Management Agency (RMA) created a dedicated Specialty Crop website to fulfill the requirements of the 2018 Farm Bill. The website lists specialty crop liaisons by Regional Office and provides a link to the 2019 Specialty Crop Report as well as a link to archived prior reports.
  - Beginning Farmer and Rancher: On March 12, 2019, RMA implemented the new definition for the Whole Farm Revenue Protection program that extends the time for new beginning farmer and rancher eligibility from 5 years to 10 years for the sales closing dates after the passage of the farm bill.
  - Multi-County Enterprise Units: Starting with sales closing dates after the passage of the farm bill RMA is offering a new endorsement for farmers. Producers of corn, grain sorghum, soybeans, cotton, canola, peanuts, rice, barley, wheat, and sunflowers now have the option to combine acreage in one county that does not qualify for enterprise units with crop acreage in another county that does qualify. The option offers flexibility and a low-cost option for producers.
  - Yield Cups: RMA has fully implemented yield cups that provide producers with an election to limit the decrease in actual production history (APH) to not more than 10% of the prior crop year's APH. This prevents abnormally low yielding years from dramatically impacting a producers APH and stabilizes insurance guarantees.
- TITLE XII – Miscellaneous**
- Agriculture and Food Defense: The Office of Homeland Security has commenced a series of events to educate the Intelligence Community on threats to agriculture and the collection of information on emerging threats.
  - United States Drought Monitor (USDM): The Office of the Chief Economist has initiated a thorough review of the data being used in the USDM, the geographic coverage of data collection sites, and other climatological data that will improve the USDM.
  - Pima Agriculture Cotton Trust Fund: The Pima Agriculture Cotton Trust Fund application period closed March 15, 2019. FAS reviewed 8 affidavits and is on course to issue payments by the statutory deadline.
  - Acer Access and Development Program: On March 12, 2019, AMS announced the availability of funding under the Acer Access and Development Program.

**Save The Date!**  
**Celebrate Cotton**  
 Saturday, September 7 • Texas Tech v. UTEP

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 U.S. all. Anyone interested in making comments about the contents of this column can call 806-792-4904 or Email PCG at: editor@plainscotton.org