



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

MAR 10 2016

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chair
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
United States Senate
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Section 1613 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (the 2002 Farm Bill) requires that the Secretary of Agriculture submit an Equitable Relief Report by February 1st of each year to the House Committee on Agriculture and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry. The 2015 Equitable Relief Report provides the number of requests for equitable relief filed with the Department of Agriculture (USDA) by participants in USDA programs pursuant to sections 1613(b) and (e) of the 2002 Farm Bill and section 278(d) of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 during the previous calendar year, and the disposition of those requests.

The enclosed report shows that program participants requested equitable relief in 727 cases filed with USDA and that USDA granted 669 of these requests and denied 56. An additional 2 requests were neither granted nor denied because they were mooted by USDA granting other forms of relief to the program participants. The enclosed report provides a detailed breakdown of these numbers.

If you have questions about the enclosed report, please ask your staff to contact Mr. Steven C. Silverman, Director of the National Appeals Division, at (703) 305-2708.

A similar letter is being sent to Ranking Member Debbie Stabenow, Chairman Mike Conaway, and Ranking Member Collin Peterson.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom J. Vilsack".

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary

Enclosure



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
United States Senate
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Stabenow:

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Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable Mike Conaway
Chair
Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Section 1613 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (the 2002 Farm Bill) requires that the Secretary of Agriculture submit an Equitable Relief Report by February 1st of each year to the House Committee on Agriculture and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry. The 2015 Equitable Relief Report provides the number of requests for equitable relief filed with the Department of Agriculture (USDA) by participants in USDA programs pursuant to sections 1613(b) and (e) of the 2002 Farm Bill and section 278(d) of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 during the previous calendar year, and the disposition of those requests.

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Washington, D.C. 20250

MAR 10 2016

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
1010 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Peterson:

Section 1613 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (the 2002 Farm Bill) requires that the Secretary of Agriculture submit an Equitable Relief Report by February 1st of each year to the House Committee on Agriculture and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry. The 2015 Equitable Relief Report provides the number of requests for equitable relief filed with the Department of Agriculture (USDA) by participants in USDA programs pursuant to sections 1613(b) and (e) of the 2002 Farm Bill and section 278(d) of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 during the previous calendar year, and the disposition of those requests.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom J. Vilsack". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary

Enclosure

Department of Agriculture 2015 Equitable Relief Report

Section 1613 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (the 2002 Farm Bill) grants the Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Directors and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationists the authority to provide equitable relief to FSA participants in price, income support, production, or loss assistance programs and NRCS conservation programs. This relief is subject to financial limitations. Section 1613 also grants this authority to the Secretary of Agriculture, without any financial limitation, and the Secretary of Agriculture has delegated this statutory authority to the FSA Administrator and the Chief of NRCS. To qualify for relief, a participant must demonstrate that he or she acted in good faith to comply with program requirements. Forms of relief include the retention of benefits received under the program, continuity of benefits, re-enrollment of land for conservation, or other appropriate relief.

Section 278(d) of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 grants the Director of the National Appeals Division the same authority to provide equitable relief to program participants as provided to the Secretary.

The following table reflects information for calendar year 2015 as required by section 1613 of the 2002 Farm Bill.

Farm Service Agency

Number of Requests for Equitable Relief:	611
Number of Requests Denied:	21
Number of Requests Approved:	590

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Number of Requests for Equitable Relief:	67
(Misaction/Misinformation)	60
(Failure to fully comply)	7
Number of Requests Denied:	14
Number of Requests Granted:	53

National Appeals Division

Number of Requests for Equitable Relief:	49
Number of Requests Denied:	21
(Including 3 cases for which there was no authority to grant Equitable Relief)	
Number of Requests Granted:	26
(Including 21 cases involving money; 4 involving extensions of time; 1 in other categories)	
Number of Requests Mooted by Favorable Outcome in Appeal:	2