

Last March 15th and 18th respectively, Members (listed below) of the House and Senate wrote RMA Administrator Ross Davidson the following letter:

Dear Administrator Davidson:

We write on behalf of our constituents wanting to take advantage of new market opportunities by diversifying into alternative crops. Unfortunately, these producers have been unable to expand their planting options due to the unavailability of crop insurance on these crops. This lack of insurance coverage creates a financial obstacle that cannot be overcome.

Specifically, producers wanting to raise sunflowers or canola find themselves unable to acquire written agreements in counties without programs for those crops. In many cases, this means they are unable to move to new crops because crop insurance is only available for traditionally-grown crops.

We understand that market forces are driving demand for these oilseeds. For sunflowers, it is estimated that U.S. sunflower acres will need to expand from the present 2 million acres to 4.5 million acres by 2010. New winter canola varieties have also been developed that are expected to bring 500,000 acres to 750,000 acres of canola into production in the Southern Plains by 2010. The addition of trans fats to the Nutrition Facts label is just one factor contributing to this increased demand. We strongly support the efforts of U.S. growers to meet changing nutrition demands with domestic oils such as canola and sunflower.

The intent of Congress in providing major expansion of the crop insurance program in 2000 was to make crop insurance more widely available. The intent was not for the program to be administered in a manner that keeps producers from diversifying their operations and limiting the risk associated from growing only a few crops. Congress has also crafted farm policy to encourage planting flexibility so producers can respond to market forces. We therefore ask that you take administrative action to extend crop insurance coverage for these crops to the counties described in the attached list effective for the 2006 crop year.

We appreciate your attention to this request, and we look forward to your prompt reply.

Representatives:

Moran (KS)
Lucas (OK)
Thornberry (TX)
Bonilla (TX)
Pomeroy (ND)
Salazar (CO)
Neugebauer (TX)
Osborne (NE)
Tiahrt (KS)
Ortiz (TX)
Hinojosa (TX)
Peterson (MN)
Musgrave (CO)
Ryun (KS)
Conaway (TX)
Rehberg (MT)

Senators:

Roberts (KS)
Brownback (KS)

Baucus (MT)
Burns (MT)
Salazar (CO)
Allard (CO)
Talent (MO)
Cornyn (TX)
Inhofe (OK)
Coburn (OK)
Conrad (ND)
Dorgan (ND)

The counties for which Congress requested crop insurance coverage expansion for fall seeded canola:

Oklahoma

Alfalfa
Blaine
Caddo
Canadian
Custer
Dewey
Ellis
Garfield
Grady
Grant
Harper
Kay
Kingfisher
Logan
Major
Payne
Woods
Woodward

Kansas

Barber
Barton
Butler
Cowley
Edwards
Harper
Harvey
Kingman
Kiowa
Pawnee
Pratt
Reno
Rice
Sedgwick
Stafford