Additional Mississippi livestock, poultry producers now eligible for USDA coronavirus aid

USDA Rule Expands CFAP 2 Payments to Livestock, Poultry Contract Producers

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.), a member of the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee, today encouraged eligible agriculture producers in Mississippi to apply for U.S. Department of Agriculture assistance related to losses linked to the coronavirus pandemic.

The USDA recently published its final rule to make contract producers of livestock and poultry eligible for assistance under the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) 2. Congress approved the direct payments as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021.

"The rule for contract growers of livestock and poultry broadens eligibility for CFAP 2, correcting an earlier oversight. I hope eligible producers will now apply for assistance if their operations were affected by disruptions caused by the ongoing pandemic," Hyde-Smith said.

Under the final rule, CFAP can now make payments to contract producers of eligible livestock and poultry for revenue losses from Jan. 1, 2020 through Dec. 27, 2020. Contract producers of broilers, pullets, layers, poultry eggs, turkeys, hogs and pigs, ducks, geese, pheasants and quail may be eligible for assistance.

Eligible producers have until Oct. 12, 2021 to apply for or modify applications for CFAP 2. Producers should contact their local Farm Service Agency office for more information regarding eligibility and relief applications.

Hyde-Smith, who also serves on the Senate Agriculture Committee, strongly supported the creation of CFAP as part of the CARES Act, in addition to other benefits in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. She also worked to have Mississippi-produced commodities, like catfish, eligible for COVID-19 agricultural aid.

Breast is Best, Quitting Smoking is, Too

Breastfeeding provides an infant with health benefits, as well as the mother. Infants who are breastfed are less likely to suffer from ear infections, obesity, and asthma. Mothers who breastfeed lower their risk of breast and cervical cancer. But, mothers who smoke risk exposing their baby to the harmful chemicals found in tobacco and e-cigarette products.

Rebecca Christian, a 35-year-old mother who works in Jackson decided to quit because she wanted to breastfeed her baby. "I started smoking cigarettes when I was 14. I thought I was cool. I didn't think about my health back then." Christian added, "I care about my health now, and mostly the health of my baby. Breastfeeding is good for me and him, smoking isn't."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) say breastfed infants are at lower risk for developing diabetes and are less likely to die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. The Mississippi State Department of Health reports that SIDS is the third leading cause of infant mortality in the state. A contributing factor to SIDS deaths is second-hand smoke. Breastfeeding and quitting smoking is best for the health of both mother and child.

According to the office of Tobacco Control at The Mississippi State Department of Health 8.9% of women giving birth in 2017 smoked at some point during their pregnancy, and 15% of mothers with an infant death, smoked at some point in their pregnancy.

"Quitting smoking provides new health and protection to you and your baby, no matter when you quit," said Sharon Nettles, Project Director of the Mississippi Tobacco-Free Coalition of Madison, Yazoo, and Holmes Counties. "These benefits are more important now than ever."

For information about the dangers of cigarettes visit www.healthyms.com/tobacco For help with quitting visit www.quitlinems.com, or call the Mississippi Tobacco Quitline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW.

MSU ag scientists use iconic M-State spirit mark to refine precision planting research

Mississippi State's iconic M-State spirit mark is showcased at the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station Black Belt Experiment Station in Brooksville as part of a research project that tests precision planting capabilities. (Photo by David Garraway)

STARKVILLE, Miss.—At a site viewable by airplane that is sure to thrill Bulldog fans who have the opportunity to fly over Noxubee County, an iconic Mississippi State spirit mark is being used in a new way by university agriculture researchers.

The M-State logo symbolizes MSU's position as a top research university, ranking among the top 15 nationally in agricultural sciences year after year, but it's rare for the spirit mark to play a role in the research itself.

When Dan Reynolds, associate vice president for international programs and former Hartwig Endowed Chair in Soybean Agronomy, tasked his research team with testing the accuracy of a precision planter, the project brought the chance to showcase the classic Mississippi State logo in an unexpected setting. The challenge resulted in twin two-acre fields lush with soybeans which have come to bear the M-State spirit mark at the Black Belt Experiment Station in Brooksville, a unit of the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station. The precision planter is a tractor equipped with GPS technology used to plant crops.

"As agronomy researchers, we study different plant populations and row spacings across different varieties. With a traditional planter, changing these factors can be quite a challenge. For instance, changing row spacing on a traditional planter means several hours of hard work in the heat," Reynolds said.

That's why the team customized the precision planter.

"Our custom research planter is based on precision planting technology. The all-electric planter is driven by GPS and allows us to easily study any row width from 15 or 40 inches through an easy-to-use hydraulic system and change any plant population, switching between two varieties without having to stop and refill the planter," he said.

Graham Oakley, research associate II, came up with the idea of using the M-State spirit mark to test the planter, and he uploaded a GIS file of the mark to the planter's software. In one plot, the team planted two varieties of soybeans, each resistant to different herbicides. One variety made up the foreground of the M-State logo, while another made up the background. Once the plant had grown lush and green, the researchers applied herbicide to terminate one of the varieties, which revealed the M-State design. In the other plot, they planted two different varieties of soybeans using the same method.

"When these soybeans mature in the field, one will be a maroon color and the other will be gray. The M-State banner and border will be maroon and everything else will be gray," Oakley said.

He explained that each M-State, approximately 250 feet long and 350 feet wide, demonstrates the accuracy of the planter and unmanned aerial vehicle technology used to observe plant growth.

"The spirit mark tests the capabilities of the planter when it comes to row narrowness and plant density," Oakley said. "We planted in a hatched pattern to get a denser image. Each row is 21 squares, which you wouldn't do in a traditional system. The detail of the M-State shows how you can switch between varieties even within a single row and shows a planting accuracy within a margin of error that's less than an inch."

He said the project also showcases the capabilities of the unmanned aerial vehicle, or UAV, the team used to verify the accuracy of the planter and to determine if differences in varieties could be obtained from the aerial view.

"We flew a UAV over both fields and it picks up the differences in the varieties. We can see the red and gray M-State via UAV even though both varieties are still currently green," Oakley said.

The display surprised a local farmer who happened to fly over the field this summer as the Bulldogs became reigning national champions. The research team, which also includes Beau Varner, research associate III, expects the maroon and gray M-State to mature into its "full glory" around the time of the SEC home opener against LSU at Davis Wade Stadium.

For more on MSU's Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, visit www.pss.msstate.edu.

For more on the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station, visit www.mafes.msstate.edu.

MSU is Mississippi's leading university, available online at www.msstate.edu.