

# Farmers in Southern Iowa Struggle with Soggy Crops

They say rain is good for the crops, but this year there is too much of a good thing for farmers in Iowa's southern counties. Many farmers are facing the loss of their crops, and income, at a point when it is probably too late to replant.

Unlike the loss of homes and businesses that falls under FEMA, the federal agency in charge of crop loss is the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). A disaster declaration must come from the Secretary of Agriculture, Thomas Vilsack, former Governor of Iowa. Such a declaration is based on monetary losses.

Governor Chet Culver has already taken the first step by asking the USDA to assess the damage to agriculture in the two most southern tiers of Iowa counties. That assessment is being carried out by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) in Iowa according to the State Director John Whitaker.

Whitaker says the assessment will take about two weeks. To be declared a disaster, there must be at least a 30% potential loss in the value of the crop in a county, or in a particular geographic area.

Once the assessment is finished, the FSA will report to Governor Culver. If damage meets the threshold in one or more areas, they will recommend Culver ask for a disaster declaration from Vilsack for that county or area. Because the programs include contiguous counties, farmers in adjoining counties may also be eligible for help.

If the declaration is issued, farmers in those counties or areas will be eligible for help under the USDA's Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments (SURE) Program. According to USDA information, the SURE program helps producers manage revenue losses. The SURE program is tailored to work in combination with Federal crop insurance and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) to reduce producers' financial risk.

Those seeking additional information should contact the local FSA office.