



Department of  
Agriculture

September 17, 2012

Farm and Foreign  
Agricultural  
Services

**INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM PM-12-045**

Risk  
Management  
Agency

**TO:** All Approved Insurance Providers  
All Risk Management Agency Field Offices  
All Other Interested Parties

P.O. Box 419205  
Kansas City,  
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**FROM:** Tim B. Witt /s/Rodger M. Matthews, for.  
Deputy Administrator

**SUBJECT:** New Method to Assign a Hardiness Zone to Insured Nursery Locations

**BACKGROUND:**

The Agricultural Research Service released an updated version of the Plant Hardiness Zone Map (PHZM). The PHZM identifies the geographic location where plants are likely to thrive based on the average annual minimum temperature.

In the past, the Risk Management Agency (RMA) used the previous version of the PHZM as a basis for assigning a hardiness zone to each county where the nursery crop insurance program was available. The hardiness zones RMA assigned to each county were used to determine if plants required protection to retain insurance coverage against cold damage.

The updated version of the PHZM offers a Geographic Information System-based interactive format that assists users in determining the precise hardiness zone of any location. Therefore, RMA is taking steps to utilize the updated version of the PHZM for determining the hardiness zone for insured nursery locations.

**ACTION:**

Beginning with the 2014 crop year, the Nursery Inventory Software and Nursery Appraisal Software will address the following regarding hardiness zone designations:

- 1) If you select a county containing only one hardiness zone, the hardiness zone will automatically populate consistent with how the Nursery Inventory Software and Nursery Appraisal Software currently operate.
- 2) If you select a county containing multiple hardiness zones, you will be required to determine the hardiness zone in which the insured nursery is located by visiting <http://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb/> and clicking on the tab labeled "Interactive Map." The hardiness zone determined using the Interactive Map must then be entered into the Nursery Inventory Software or the Nursery Appraisal Software, as applicable.



The Risk Management Agency Administrators  
And Oversees All Programs Authorized Under  
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For the 2014 crop year, RMA will update applicable nursery handbooks by the January 31 contract change date to include procedures on using the Interactive Map.

**DISPOSAL DATE:**

May 31, 2014