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RMA Answers Frequently Asked Questions on Cover Crop Management

SPOKANE, Wash., April 3, 2014 – The USDA’s RMA Management Agency (RMA) released Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) concerning revisions to its position on cover crops, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Cover Crop Termination Guidelines, and crop insurance for the 2014 crop year.

“These questions and answers provide valuable information for producers who want to take advantage of the conservation benefits that cover crops provide while remaining in compliance with federal crop insurance rules,” said Dave Paul, Director of RMA Spokane Regional Office.

RMA made procedural changes to provide more flexibility for cover crop management due to changing weather conditions and changes in cover crop practices for the 2014 crop year. To ensure that RMA policies were up to date with evolving cover crop practices, the agency coordinated with the NRCS and Farm Service Agency (FSA) through an interagency workgroup to develop a consistent, simple and flexible cover crop policy across the three agencies. Specifically, the interagency group was tasked to develop cover crop management guidelines so that producers can achieve conservation benefits of cover crops while minimizing risk of reducing yield to the following crop due to soil water use.

In June 2013, the interagency group released its first version of “NRCS Cover Crops Termination Guidelines (NRCS Guidelines)”. In December 2013, the group released its second version of the NRCS Guidelines. The NRCS Guidelines are to be applied across all USDA agencies. In response to the release of the NRCS Guidelines, RMA developed a new Special Provisions statement to incorporate the new cover crop management and termination guidance.

The FAQs can be found online at www.rma.usda.gov/help/faq/covercrops2014.html .

Cover crops for conservation purposes have been around for decades, but are now being embraced on a wider basis due to the increased understanding of the benefits for soil quality, nutrient cycles, erosion control, weed management, and soil water availability.

More information about cover crops and commercial crop insurability in the Cover Crop Special Provisions of Insurance is available at www.rma.usda.gov .

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