



NEWS RELEASE

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Farm Service Agency Holds Cotton Program Referendum Sign-up *September 4 through November 30, 2007*

(Jackson, MS –September 4, 2007) – Cotton producers and importers who want USDA’s Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS) to conduct a referendum regarding the Cotton Research and Promotion Program can sign-up at their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office September 4, through November 30, 2007. No action is necessary if a continuance referendum is not desired.

“This sign-up period allows eligible cotton producers and importers to request a referendum for continuation of the 1990 amendments to the Cotton Research and Promotion Act,” said Mickey L. Black, State Executive Director for Mississippi FSA. “

In March 2007, following a comprehensive mandatory five-year review, USDA endorsed continuation of the 1991 Order amendments without a continuance referendum. This sign-up period is significant because, “If results of the sign-up period show that at least 10 percent (4,622) of the voting program participants request the conduct of a continuance referendum, then a referendum will be held within 12 months of the sign-up period end date,” said Black.

Changes to the Cotton Research and Promotion Program were approved in a July 1991, referendum, by a 60 percent majority of cotton producers and importers who voted. These changes included: (1) importer representation on the Cotton Board, the organization that assists the Department in administrating the Cotton Research and Promotion Program; (2) assessments levied on imported cotton and cotton products; (3) increasing the amount the Department can be reimbursed for the conduct o a referendum from \$200,000 to \$300,000; (4) reimbursing government agencies that assist in administering the collection of assessments on imported cotton and cotton products; and (5) terminating the right of cotton producers to demand a refund of assessments.

According to Black, eligible producers are individuals over age 18 engaged in the production of upland cotton during calendar year 2006. Eligible importers are those who imported upland cotton in excess of the value of \$2.00 per line item entry during calendar year 2006. Black advises that other eligibility requirements might apply and eligibility will be determined by FSA.

Producers and importers will receive correspondence from FSA regarding the cotton referendum sign-up. For more information, please contact your local FSA Office or visit the national website at www.fsa.usda.gov.

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