



Karen Neeley, General Counsel for the Independent Bankers Association of Texas, suggested changes in the federal crop insurance program at the Commission's hearing in Austin, Texas.

insurance plan incorporates the whole-farm approach and uses a farmer's historical Schedule F tax form information as a base to provide guaranteed revenue during the period of insurance coverage. This model provides an insurance safety net for multiple agricultural commodities in one insurance package.

- ☀ A different approach stems from the Australian Drought Policy Review Task Force's report issued in 1990. The Task Force's goal was to achieve self-reliance among farmers and recommended that only in extreme circumstances—a one in 20- to 25-year drought event that lasts 12 months—would the government provide aid in the form of debt subsidies and income support. The respective roles for farmers and the government were clearly spelled out. Farmers would assume greater responsibility for managing risks arising from climate variability while the government would help create an overall environment conducive to this planning and risk-management approach. The government would increase funding for drought research and training on drought risk management and provide savings incentives and tax policy

changes. The Australian approach does not include provisions for government crop insurance.

Relief. Many comments we received recognized the importance of moving away from the traditional approach to drought that is driven by emergency relief to a new approach that emphasizes planning and proactive mitigation. At the same time, we were cautioned that it will take time to provide the training and technical assistance needed to help farmers, ranchers, local businesses, communities, states, and tribes make this transition. A safety net is needed, we were told, to help overcome the impacts of extreme occurrences of drought or the impacts of multifaceted disasters (for example, flood/drought or hail/drought).

Approximately 47 federal programs have an element of drought-related relief, primarily for agricultural droughts. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, for example, follows a "bottom up" procedure for emergency disaster designations, but the Commission recognizes that the process needs to be streamlined. In every county in the nation, there is a County Emergency Board consisting of a representative from each of the five Department of Agriculture agencies that