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### **Agriculture: Innovation and Resiliency Prevail Amidst Drought of 2012**

The drought of 2012 is the most serious to impact U.S. agriculture since 1988, and some would suggest it rivals that year. American agriculture, and more importantly, American farmers are resilient against adversity. Certainly, advancements on the farm, in the lab and in the marketplace continue to help agriculture weather natural disasters more easily than just a few years ago. However, it still does not take away the fact that a farmer's goal is to do his part to feed more of the world this year than he did last year. This has been a tough year and growing season to realize that goal.

The widespread drought that has plagued the Hoosier state, along with other "I" states has imposed stress on people, crops and livestock. As we wait the next few months to truly assess the Indiana corn and soybean crop, many farmers have already realized their crop will be significantly less, and in some instances may be zero. This is a dramatic change from the start of the growing season as initial projections were that U.S. farmers would harvest the largest corn crop on record. Personally, on our farm, we began feeding hay to cattle in mid-June, so the shortage of feed and forage also is a hardship that producers are facing this year.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) data suggests that most of the row crops in the drought-stricken Hoosier landscape are covered by crop insurance. During the summer of 2012, USDA's Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced several administrative actions to assist farmers across the country. First and foremost, USDA streamlined the disaster designation process that has allowed USDA to quickly and efficiently authorize emergency aid to farmers, including Indiana where all 92 counties have been declared natural disaster areas for drought. USDA also lowered the interest rate for Farm Service Agency (FSA) emergency loans from 3.75% to 2.25% and authorized emergency haying and grazing on 144,000 Hoosier acres of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) practices. To further assist, FSA reduced the payment reduction for emergency haying grazing on those CRP practices from 25 percent to 10 percent.

Secretary Vilsack personally encouraged crop insurance companies to provide a short grace period for farmers on unpaid insurance premiums – and all of the major crop insurance companies agreed. In addition, most recently, changes have been made to the crop insurance program to allow producers to plant cover crops this fall that can provide much needed forage to livestock.

The FSA collection of disaster programs in the 2008 Farm Bill expired on September 30, 2011. However, in light of a new Farm Bill or extension forthcoming from Congress, FSA recommends that owners and producers be proactive and record all pertinent information of natural disaster consequences, including: documentation of the number and kind of livestock mortality, supplemented if possible by photographs or video records of ownership and losses; dates of loss supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts; costs of transporting livestock to new pastures; and feed purchases if supplies or grazing pastures are destroyed.

The drought underscores the need for Congress to complete action on a new farm bill. All sectors of agriculture – crop farmers, livestock, dairy and poultry producers – need assurance that improved risk management and disaster mitigation tools to help them remain viable in the marketplace, are on the way from Congress.

We will get through this. Harvest has started across the state. Farmers are buying seed to prepare and plan for crop year 2013. The resiliency of the American farmer is unparalleled.

Personally, my thoughts and prayers are with the thousands of Indiana farm families who have been affected by this natural disaster. Additionally, I am proud to work in this industry and with some of the most innovative, diverse and entrepreneurial people in America.