



## Washington Report January 29, 2010

### CIRB News...

**Reminder: Annual Meeting Just Over One Week Away.** The CIRB 2010 “Meeting of the Year” begins in 12 days! We can’t wait for this year’s program, which can be found [here](#) along with our registration materials. Be sure to take care of any last-minute arrangements and let us know if we can help. You can reach us by phone at (202) 544-0067.

### SRA News...

**Peterson Suggests Changes to Agent Compensation.** While he voiced concerns with the Risk Management Agency’s proposed Standard Reinsurance Agreement, House Agriculture Chairman Collin Peterson advocated for changes to commission payments to agents. Current commissions are based on the premiums required to insure a crop, thereby increasing as commodity prices rise. With this in mind, Peterson suggested paying agents a fee for each policy written. For more information, click [here](#).

**Commodity Groups Weigh In on SRA.** Ten national agriculture organizations penned a letter to Agriculture Secretary Vilsack expressing their concerns about the cuts to the crop insurance program included in the draft SRA. The letter references the significant cuts made to the program in the 2008 Farm Bill. The complete list of signers includes the American Farm Bureau Federation, American Soybean Association, National Association of Wheat Growers, National Corn Growers Association, National Cotton Council, National Farmers Union, National Sorghum Producers, Southern Peanut Farmers Federation, U.S. Rice Producers Association, and USA Rice Federation. To view the letter, click [here](#)

### Congressional News...

**Peterson: Crop Insurance Could Be Part of New Farm Safety Net.** In an address to the National Association of Wheat Growers and U.S. Wheat Associates, Chairman Peterson criticized farm policy reform advocates for their visceral support for limiting payments to large farms. He did, however, acknowledge the need for reform and suggested creating a safety net that would return to farmers their costs of production. Peterson noted that crop insurance might be an integral part of such a safety net. He is interested in addressing whole farm income rather than the protection of particular crops.

**Spending Freeze Unlikely to Affect Agriculture.** Chairman Peterson also noted this week that the Obama Administration's call for a three-year spending freeze on many domestic programs would be unlikely to affect commodity subsidies or other farm support programs. He pointed out that the freeze only pertains to discretionary spending, whereas Farm Bill programs constitute mandatory spending. For more information, click [here](#).

**Congress to Shift Focus from Healthcare to Jobs.** This week, in his State of the Union address, President Barack Obama called on Congress to quickly take up **job creation legislation** intended to boost the economy. On the heels of the President's remarks, Senate Democratic leaders are preparing to unveil a bill next week that is likely to include an extension of unemployment and healthcare benefits, multiple small business tax breaks, and added infrastructure spending. Although economic recovery has become an urgent priority, House and Senate leaders are still devising a strategy for moving **healthcare overhaul legislation** through the two chambers.

### Industry News...

**NFU Opposes Budget Cuts to Crop Insurance.** In a letter, the National Farmers Union shared with Secretary Vilsack its concern regarding potential cuts to the crop insurance program in the Fiscal Year 2011 budget. NFU noted the program's importance to the overall farm safety net, and highlighted the A&O reimbursement reductions passed in the 2008 Farm Bill. To view the letter, click [here](#).

### USDA News...

**NASS Releases New Geospatial Data.** The National Agricultural Statistics Service announced the release of satellite images depicting agricultural land cover across much of the nation for the 2009 crop year. The images, known as cropland data layers, are available for 47 of the 48 contiguous states. Data for Florida will be available this spring. For more information, click [here](#).

**FCIC Board Meeting to be Held on February 11.** The Federal Crop Insurance Corporation Board of Directors will hold its next meeting on Thursday, February 11, 2010 in Washington, DC. To view the public agenda, click [here](#).

**Vilsack Announces USDA Appointments.** Agriculture Secretary Vilsack this week announced several staff appointments. **Darci Vetter**, who previously served on the Senate Finance Committee, will take over as Deputy Undersecretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, replacing Burnham "Bud" Philbrook. Vilsack also promoted **John Brewer** to Administrator of the Foreign Agricultural Service from his previous post as Associate Administrator.

**2009 Crop Year Rainfall Index Interval V Final Grid Indices for Apiculture and Pasture, Rangeland, and Forage.** For more information, click [here](#).