



United States Department of Agriculture

FEB 13 2003

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable Charles Stenholm
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Agriculture
U. S. House of Representatives
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Stenholm:

Section 1613 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (the 2002 Act) requires that the Secretary of Agriculture submit a report by February 1st of each year to the House Committee on Agriculture and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry. That report describes the number of requests for equitable relief that producers filed pursuant to sections 1613(b) and (e) of the 2002 Act and section 278(d) of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (Reorganization Act) during the previous year and their disposition.

Three subordinate officials are responsible for responding to requests for equitable relief, and I asked them to supply that information to me. The Administrator of the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) have provided me with the enclosed information that shows the number of equitable relief requests they processed under section 1613 of the 2002 Act through the end of calendar year 2002. The Director of the National Appeals Division (NAD) of the Office of the Secretary has provided the enclosed information for requests filed under section 278(d) of the Reorganization Act.

The enclosure is a consolidated report of the numbers provided by all three officials. The numbers for FSA and NRCS reflect requests for equitable relief under section 1613 since its enactment, while the NAD numbers reflect the entire calendar year for requests under the previously enacted Section 278(d) of the Reorganization Act.

I trust this information will be useful to the Committee. Please let me know if I may be of further assistance. I am sending identical letters to Senator Cochran, Senator Harkin, and Congressman Stenholm.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ann M. Veneman", written over a horizontal line.

Ann M. Veneman
Secretary

Section 1613 of the 2002 Act requires that the Secretary report to the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate, on or before February 1st of each year certain information about equitable relief. Section 1613(g)(2) requires the report to include:

(1) the number of requests for equitable relief under subsections (b) and (e) and the disposition of the requests; and

(2) the number of requests for equitable relief under section 278(d) of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 6998(d)) and the disposition of the requests.

The following are the required totals from FSA, NRCS and NAD:

Farm Service Agency

May 3, 2002 (enactment of the 2002 Act), through December 31, 2002

Number of Requests for Equitable Relief:	101
Amount of Program Benefit Relief Requested:	\$ 773,408.
Amount of Program Benefit Relief Granted:	\$ 535,077.

Natural Resource Conservation Service

Number of Requests for Equitable Relief:	1
Amount of Program Benefit Relief Requested:	\$ 2,947.
Amount of Program Benefit Relief Granted:	\$ 2,947.

National Appeals Division

January 1, 2002 to June 16, 2002:

Requests for Equitable Relief:	63
Equitable Relief Denied:	50
Equitable Relief Granted:	13 (Includes decisions involving equitable relief in which Appellant ultimately prevailed.)

June 19, 2002 to December 31, 2002 (tenure of current NAD Director)

Requests for Equitable Relief:	32
Equitable Relief Denied:	19
Equitable Relief Granted:	13 (Includes decisions involving equitable relief in which Appellant ultimately prevailed.)