



## United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary  
Washington, D.C. 20250

FEB 5 2004

The Honorable Robert Goodlatte  
Chairman, Committee on Agriculture  
U. S. House of Representatives  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Section 1613 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (the 2002 Farm Bill) requires that the Secretary of Agriculture submit a report by February 1<sup>st</sup> 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) and section 278(d) of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (Reorganization Act) during the previous calendar year and their disposition.

Three subordinate agencies are responsible for responding to requests for equitable relief, and I asked those agencies 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 Farm Bill during calendar year 2003. 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.

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 Chairman Cochran, Senator Harkin and Congressman Stenholm.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ann Veneman", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ann Veneman  
Secretary

Enclosure

## Requests for Equitable Relief: January 1–December 31, 2003

Section 1613 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 requires that the Secretary of Agriculture 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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. 2998(d)) and the disposition of the requests.

The following are required totals from FSA, NRCS and NAD for January 1 through December 31, 2003:

### Farm Service Agency

Number of Requests for Equitable Relief:	308
Amount of Program Benefit Relief Requested:	\$1,246,259.50
Amount of Program Benefit Relief Granted:	\$ 697,046.56

### Natural Resources Conservation Service

Number of Requests for Equitable Relief:	0
Amount of Program Benefit Relief Requested:	\$ 0
Amount of Program Benefit Relief Granted	\$ 0

### National Appeals Division

Requests for Equitable Relief:	61
Equitable Relief Denied:	44
Equitable Relief Granted:	17
(including nine cases involving money and eight involving extensions of time)	

The Farm Service Agency has requested that the National Appeals Division reverse the approval of relief in one case granted in 2003 because the case involved an agricultural credit program not subject to the equitable relief provisions of section 1613. That request is pending as of the date of this report.