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ASSISTANT DIRECTOR KRIZ-WICKHAM ENCOURAGES PRODUCERS TO CONSIDER DROUGHT RESOURCES

LINCOLN – Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) Assistant Director Bobbie Kriz-Wickham would like to remind farmers and ranchers affected by the continuing drought to look into their options for assistance.

Kriz-Wickham, who also serves as the chair of the state’s Climate Assessment Response Committee, said while the U.S. Drought Monitor map released today shows improvements, many areas of the state, particularly in the southwest and central regions, are continuing to deal with severe drought conditions.

“There are assistance programs available through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for qualified farmers and ranchers,” Kriz-Wickham said. “This includes aid for such things as planting cover crops for forage and to preserve soil, for livestock water needs and for forage losses.”

USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has launched the Drought Recovery Initiative, available for producers in counties that were designated as D3 (extreme) or D4 (exceptional) drought areas on the U.S. Drought Monitor map as of May 20, 2014. Kriz-Wickham said producers interested in learning more about this program need to visit a local NRCS office soon as the sign-up deadline is June 20. The program is available in these Nebraska counties: Keith, Perkins, Chase, Dundy, Hitchcock, Hayes, Lincoln, Frontier and Red Willow.

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The Initiative allows producers to apply for assistance to implement conservation practices such as cover crops, critical area planting, fencing, forage and biomass planting, pipeline, well and pumping stations for livestock water, range planting and more.

Another program available is the Livestock Forage Disaster Program, which is operated by the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA). According to Kriz-Wickham, sign-up for this program is ongoing, and producers should contact their local USDA FSA office to learn more about the eligibility requirements. The program assists producers with livestock forage losses associated with drought conditions experienced beginning in 2012.

“While timely precipitation obviously is the best fix for drought, these programs are important tools to help producers manage their operations through this difficult time,” Kriz-Wickham said.

Drought resource information can be found at www.droughtcentral.nebraska.gov, or <http://droughtresources.unl.edu/>.

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