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JULY 28, 1989

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DOLE PROPOSES DROUGHT/DISASTER PACKAGE:  
PRODUCERS WITH CROP INSURANCE TO GET HIGHEST PAYMENTS  
TIGHTER RESTRICTIONS FOR NON-PROGRAM CROPS

WASHINGTON -- Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole (R-Ks) today proposed a disaster assistance package aimed at breaking a stalemate on a Senate disaster assistance bill for drought-wracked winter wheat farmers and producers of other crops, particularly program crops.

Payment rates under the Dole plan would be the same as the 35%/65% formula contained in last year's Drought Relief Act. The proposal would also sharply reduce the number of non-program crops that can qualify for federal money -- as many as 600 under the House and Senate Committees' plans -- by establishing a 50%/50% threshold for those crops.

According to Senator Dole, wheat producers experiencing a 50% loss on a 1,000 acre farm would receive \$.27 more per bushel in assistance than non-insured producers and \$.27 more per bushel than the Democratic plan allows.

For corn growers sustaining a 50% loss on a 200 acre farm, they would be getting almost \$.19 more per bushel than non-insured producers and \$.19 more than under the committee bill.

"This recognizes there is a priority on the drought relief front. If it is acceptable -- and I have already heard some positive feedback from some Democrats -- we can move quickly to bring relief to disaster-plagued farmers. They need help now and this package is designed to treat farmers in a fair and equitable manner," Dole said. "At the same time distinctions are made between producers who have crop insurance and those who do not. In addition, we have crafted a payment distinction between program and non-program crop producers. Given their commitments to strict government regulations, program producers deserve a higher rate of support.

"Because of our extremely tight financial considerations, this is the most realistic way to target assistance to those farmers who are paying for disaster legislation through unspent deficiency payments -- program crop participants -- while also ensuring that producers of other crops have some protection against heavy losses," Dole added.

Dole also noted he would seek to ensure that sunflowers and soybeans, both oilseed crops, are treated equally in a final package.

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