

The Deming Headlight

USDA outlines claims for Hispanic, women farmers and ranchers

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ESPANOLA, N.M. - USDA Rural Utilities Acting Administrator John Padalino spoke to members of the New Mexico Acequia Association about opportunities for Hispanic and Women Farmers and ranchers. USDA has extended the voluntary claims process for Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers who allege discrimination by the USDA in past decades. All claims must now be filed by May 1, 2013.

"USDA urges any Hispanic or women farmers or ranchers who believe they may have been the subject of discrimination by USDA to apply for a claims package," said Padalino. "Those who file a claim will be considered for a cash payment or for loan forgiveness."

The New Mexico Acequia Association meeting was held at Northern New Mexico Community College. Padalino explained how to receive a claims package. He also said the process offers a voluntary alternative to litigation for each Hispanic or female farmer and rancher who can prove that USDA denied his or her application for loan or [loan servicing](#) assistance for discriminatory reasons for certain time periods between 1981 and 2000.

As announced in February 2011, the voluntary claims process will make available at least \$1.33 billion for cash awards and [tax relief](#) payments, plus up to \$160 million in farm debt relief, to eligible Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers. There are no filing fees to participate in the program.

Call center representatives can be reached at 1-888-508-4429. Claimants may [register](#) for a claims package (by calling the number or visiting the website) or may download the forms from the website. All those interested in learning more or receiving information about the claims process and claims packages are encouraged to visit the website at any time or to contact the call center telephone number Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern Time.

Claim packages and other documentation may be mailed to Hispanic and Women Farmers and Ranchers Claims Administrator, PO Box 4540, Portland, OR 97208-4540.