

FEATURE – NO NEED FOR EARLY CRP LAND RELEASE

INTRO: Adequate corn and soybean crops were among the reasons cited by Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer in announcing that there would be no early release for CRP land. The USDA's Bob Ellison has more. (1:20)

AGRICULTURE SECRETARY ED SCHAFER SAYS LARGE CROP FORECASTS AND EXPECTED REDUCTIONS IN CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM ACRES WERE REASONS NOT TO ALLOW FOR EARLY C-R-P LAND RELEASE. SCHAFER SAID IN A TELEPHONE INTERVIEW WITH REPORTERS THAT RELEASING LAND WAS UNNECESSARY TO HELP CROP PRICES OR MEET FOOD AND FEED NEEDS.

Ed Schafer, Agriculture Secretary: The strength of the commitment of America's farmers have made to meeting the nation's need for corn for food, feed and fuel has reassured markets that there will be an adequate supply available this year.

SCHAFER SAID TOTAL ACREAGE IN THE PROGRAM WOULD DROP ANYWAY WITHOUT ANY ACTION BY USDA. DUE TO TERMS OF THE TWO THOUSAND EIGHT FARM BILL, EXISTING C-R-P CONTRACTS AND PRODUCERS ABSORBING PENALTIES TO PUT LAND BACK INTO PRODUCTION.

Schafer: So, large blocks of land will be available for other uses if land owners choose to pursue them.

This spring, the number of acres being withdrawn early with financial benefits being repaid was running more than fifty percent higher than last year.

SCHAFER ADDED THAT U-S-D-A HAS NO PLANS FOR DOING A NEW ENROLLMENT OF C-R-P ACRES. CURRENTLY, THIRTY FOUR POINT SEVEN MILLION ACRES ARE IN THE C-R-P, UNDER WHICH LANDOWNERS GET FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO KEEP ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LAND OUT OF PRODUCTION FOR TEN YEARS OR MORE. IN WASHINGTON D-C FOR THE U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, I'M BOB ELLISON.