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Wednesday, May 3, 2017

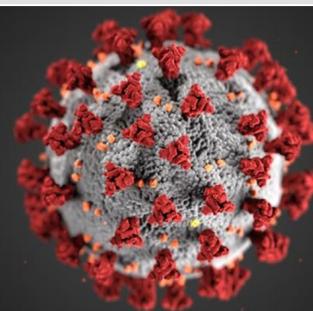
## Wisconsin Farmer Sentenced to Federal Prison for Crop Insurance Fraud

Gregory J. Haanstad, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Wisconsin, announced that on April 27, 2017, Jeffrey Lewke (age: 39) was sentenced to six months in federal prison for a violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1001, making a false statement within the jurisdiction of the executive branch of the United States. In addition to the prison term, Lewke was ordered to serve an additional 6 months of home confinement, pay a \$2,000 fine, and pay \$23,799.44 in restitution to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The USDA, through the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC), provides insurance to farmers for unavoidable crop losses. The FCIC provides insurance by reinsuring private crop insurance companies for losses claimed by their policy holders.

Pursuant to the terms of a plea agreement, Lewke acknowledged that during the 2011 crop season, he falsely represented that he irrigated 120 acres of land in Waushara County more times than he actually did. By doing so, he attempted to fraudulently obtain a nearly \$63,000 insurance claim. In total, Lewke acknowledged that he submitted \$246,606.53 worth of fraudulent insurance claims during the 2011 crop season.

Moreover, Lewke acknowledged that he attempted to fraudulently obtain additional monies through other false crop insurance claims in 2011. For instance, Lewke falsely claimed that he was prevented from planting a number of properties due to excessive moisture, when in fact, he never attempted to plant some of those properties, some of those properties were already planted with corn, and in one instance, the property was actually a horse pasture. In addition, Lewke fraudulently "shifted" his production by claiming that he produced corn in Dodge County, when in fact he produced the corn in



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Clark County. By so doing, he falsely claimed that he was entitled to another \$70,000 of insurance payments for a loss in Clark County.

At Lewke’s sentencing hearing, District Judge Pamela Pepper described the federal crop insurance program at as a “safety net” for farmers in need, from which Lewke stole while he was enjoying the financial success of farming over 12,000 acres in Wisconsin during the 2011 crop season.

This case was investigated by the United States Department of Agriculture - Office of Inspector General. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Keith S. Alexander

# # # # #

**For additional Information contact:**

Public Information Officer Dean Puschnig at (414) 297-1700

**Component(s):**

USAO - Wisconsin, Eastern

Updated May 3, 2017

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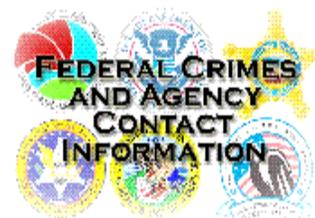


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