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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains regulatory documents having general applicability and legal effect, most of which are keyed to and codified in the Code of Federal Regulations, which is published under 50 titles pursuant to 44 U.S.C. 1510.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Federal Crop Insurance Corporation

7 CFR Part 400

General Administrative Regulations; Reinsurance Agreement—Standards for Approval; Regulations for the 1997 and Subsequent Reinsurance Years

AGENCY: Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, USDA.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: The Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC) is revising the General Administrative Regulations, Subpart-L Reinsurance Agreement—Standards for Approval; Regulations for the 1997 and Subsequent Reinsurance Years. The intended effect of this rule is to clarify the time frame in which all requests for a final agency determination must be submitted.

EFFECTIVE DATES: This rule is effective January 25, 2000.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Heyward Baker, Director, Reinsurance Services Division, telephone (202) 720-4232.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Executive Order 12866

This rule has been determined to be exempt for the purposes of Executive Order 12866 and, therefore, has not been reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995

It has been determined by OMB that this rule is exempt from the information collection requirement contained under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35).

Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995

Title II of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 (UMRA), Public

Law 104-4, establishes requirements for Federal agencies to assess the effects of their regulatory actions on State, local, and tribal governments and the private sector. This rule contains no Federal mandates (under the regulatory provisions of title II of UMRA) for State, local, and tribal governments or the private sector. Therefore, this rule is not subject to the requirements of sections 202 and 205 of UMRA.

Executive Order 13132

The policies contained in this rule do not have any substantial direct effect on states, on the relationship between the national government and the states, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities among the various levels of government. Nor does this rule impose substantial direct compliance costs on state and local governments. Therefore, consultation with the states is not required.

Regulatory Flexibility Act

This regulation will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. The regulation does not require any more action on the part of the small entities than is required on the part of large entities. Therefore, this action is determined to be exempt from the provisions of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 605), and no Regulatory Flexibility Analysis was prepared.

Federal Assistance Program

This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under No. 10.450.

Executive Order 12372

This program is not subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372 which require intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. See the Notice related to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V, published at 48 FR 29115, June 24, 1983.

Executive Order 12988

This rule has been reviewed in accordance with Executive Order 12988 on civil justice reform. The provisions of this rule will not have a retroactive effect. The provisions of this rule will preempt State and local laws to the extent such State and local laws are inconsistent herewith. The administrative appeal provisions must be exhausted before any action for

judicial review of any determination made by FCIC may be brought.

Environmental Evaluation

This action is not expected to have a significant economic impact on the quality of the human environment, health, and safety. Therefore, neither an Environmental Assessment nor an Environmental Impact Statement is needed.

Background

On August 22, 1988, FCIC has implemented a process in cases when it suspects a violation of the provisions of the Standard Reinsurance Agreement where it provides the applicable reinsured company with a copy of initial findings, allowed the reinsured company to respond, and then issued a final determination. If the reinsured company disputed the final determination, the reinsured company was required to appeal within 45 days of receipt of the determination to the Deputy Manager of FCIC.

On May 1, 1995, FCIC revised this appeals process and now when a reinsured company disputed the final determination it was required to request a final agency determination from the Director of Compliance. The process also stated that the reinsured company "may" request the final agency determination within 45 days. A controversy has arisen with respect to whether the 45 day time frame is mandatory or permissive. Although FCIC has always treated the 45 day time frame as mandatory under both the old and new process, and the reinsured companies have routinely complied with this requirement, FCIC is revising the language to make it clear that the 45 day time frame is a mandatory requirement.

FCIC is also revising the section to have all requests for a final agency determination be submitted to the Deputy Administrator for Insurance Services or the Deputy Administrator for Compliance to be in conformance with the renaming of titles in the recent reorganization.

The changes in this rule do not change current requirements as understood by the reinsured companies and FCIC. This rule is merely interpretative and, therefore, exempt from the requirements for notice and comment and the 30 day delay in the effectiveness of this rule.

List of Subjects in 7 CFR Part 400

Administrative practice and procedures, Claims, Crop insurance, Penalties.

Final Rule

Accordingly, as set forth in the preamble, the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation hereby amends 7 CFR part 400 as follows:

PART 400—GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS

1. The authority citation for 7 CFR part 400 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 1506(1), 1506(p).

2. Section 400.169 is revised to read as follows:

§ 400.169 Disputes.

(a) If the company believes that the Corporation has taken an action that is not in accordance with the provisions of the Standard Reinsurance Agreement or any reinsurance agreement with FCIC, except compliance issues, it may request the Deputy Administrator of Insurance Services to make a final administrative determination addressing the disputed action. The Deputy Administrator of Insurance Services will render the final administrative determination of the Corporation with respect to the applicable actions. All requests for a final administrative determination must be in writing and submitted within 45 days after receipt after the disputed action.

(b) With respect to compliance matters, the Compliance Field Office renders an initial finding, permits the company to respond, and then issues a final finding. If the company believes that the Compliance Field Office's final finding is not in accordance with the applicable laws, regulations, custom or practice of the insurance industry, or FCIC approved policy and procedure, it may request, the Deputy Administrator of Compliance to make a final administrative determination addressing the disputed final finding. The Deputy Administrator of Compliance will render the final administrative determination of the Corporation with respect to these issues. All requests for a final administrative determination must be in writing and submitted within 45 days after receipt of the final finding.

(c) A company may also request reconsideration by the Deputy Administrator of Insurance Services of a decision of the Corporation rendered under any Corporation bulletin or directive which bulletin or directive does not interpret, explain, or restrict the terms of the reinsurance agreement.

The company, if it disputes the Corporation's determination, must request a reconsideration of that determination in writing, within 45 days of the receipt of the determination. The determinations of the Deputy Administrator will be final and binding on the company. Such determinations will not be appealable to the Board of Contract Appeals.

(d) Appealable final administrative determinations of the Corporation under paragraph (a) or (b) of this section may be appealed to the Board of Contract Appeals in accordance with the provisions of subtitle A, part 24 of title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

Signed in Washington, D.C., on January 18, 2000.

Kenneth D. Ackerman,

Manager, Federal Crop Insurance Corporation.

[FR Doc. 00-1702 Filed 1-24-00; 8:45am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Federal Crop Insurance Corporation****7 CFR Part 457****Common Crop Insurance Regulations; Forage Production Crop Provisions; and Forage Seeding Crop Provisions**

AGENCY: Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, USDA.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: The Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC) finalizes specific crop provisions for the insurance of forage production and forage seeding. The intended effect of this action is to provide policy changes to better meet the needs of the insured. The changes will be effective for the 2001 and subsequent crop years.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This rule is effective February 24, 2000.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Richard Brayton, Insurance Management Specialist, Product Development Division, Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, United States Department of Agriculture, 9435 Holmes Road, Kansas City, MO, 64131, telephone (816) 926-7730.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:*Executive Order 12866*

This rule has been determined to be exempt for the purpose of Executive Order 12866 and, therefore, has not been reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995

Pursuant to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the collections of information in this rule have been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under control number 0563-0053 through April 30, 2001.

Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995

Title II of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 (UMRA) establishes requirements for Federal agencies to assess the effects of their regulatory actions on State, local, and tribal governments and the private sector. This rule contains no Federal mandates (under the regulatory provisions of title II of the UMRA) for State, local, and tribal governments or the private sector. Therefore, this rule is not subject to the requirements of sections 202 and 205 of the UMRA.

Executive Order 13132

The policies contained in this rule do not have any substantial direct effect on states, on the relationship between the national government and the states, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities among the various levels of government. Nor does this rule impose substantial direct compliance costs on state and local governments. Therefore, consultation with the states is not required.

Regulatory Flexibility Act

This regulation will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. Additionally, the regulation does not require any action on the part of small entities than is required on the part of large entities. The amount of work required of the insurance companies will not increase because the information used to determine eligibility must already be collected under the present policy. No additional work is required as a result of this action on the part of either the insured or the insurance companies. Therefore, this action is determined to be exempt from the provisions of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 605), and no Regulatory Flexibility Analysis was prepared.

Federal Assistance Program

This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under No. 10.450.

Executive Order 12372

This program is not subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372 which require intergovernmental consultation with State and local