

WASHINGTON, DC - Congressman Steny Hoyer announced today that federal funds he helped secure in the fiscal year 2004 Omnibus Appropriations bill could benefit Maryland farmers. Farmers who sign up for crop insurance by March 15 will benefit from an additional cost-share incentive authorized by Congress. The federal funds will be used to pay 15 percent of the producers' net premium at the 70 to 85 percent coverage levels.

"Crop insurance is an essential and successful program that helps producers in our state mitigate or reduce production, price or revenue risks," said Congressman Hoyer. "I am glad that I was able to help secure funds for a federal cost-share for Maryland farmers so that they can utilize this valuable program and obtain much-needed crop insurance assistance. I urge Maryland farmers to contact their crop insurance agents before March 15 to benefit from the cost-share."

Mr. Charles Otto, President of the Maryland Grain Producers Association said, "Crop insurance is one of the primary tools available to a farmer to manage risk - especially when farmers purchase higher coverage levels. We appreciate Congressman Hoyer's efforts to keep the basic provisions of the AMA intact in order to make the higher levels of crop insurance more affordable for Maryland farmers."

The Agriculture Management Assistance (AMA) Program is a voluntary program that provides financial assistance to producers in 15 states. The assistance encourages and helps producers adopt natural resources conservation practices and investment in strategies that will reduce or mitigate risk.

Congress passed the Omnibus Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2004 in January in which Congressman Hoyer worked to secure \$5 million in funds to make sure that the AMA can be used for additional crop insurance premiums, especially in states like Maryland which have put forth an aggressive crop insurance program. Maryland and Pennsylvania will receive \$3 million of the funds allocated for the AMA.

Crop Insurance provides protection against losses in crop production due to natural perils, including drought, hail, frost, excessive moisture and other adverse weather conditions. New forage seedings are insurable in Maryland for the first time this year. Other crops with March 15 sales closing dates include: corn, fresh market sweet corn, fresh market tomatoes, grain sorghum, oats, potatoes, processing beans, processing sweet corn, processing tomatoes, soybeans and tobacco. Crop Revenue Coverage for corn, grain sorghum and soybeans is also

available to provide protection against a decline in market prices.

**# # #**