



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

*GAO 00130*

Mr. Ray V. Fitzgerald  
Administrator, Agricultural  
Stabilization and  
Conservation Service  
Department of Agriculture

*AGC 00574*

Dear Mr. Fitzgerald:

*Bck.*

County Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service offices either have already started or will shortly start selecting farms for quality control spot checks of acreage certifications for the 1979 wheat and feed grains set-aside programs.

*f/c.*

*A* Our review of the administration of the 1978 wheat and feed grains set-aside programs in 12 counties in Colorado, Kansas, and Minnesota revealed that none of the county offices had followed all prescribed sampling procedures in selecting farms whose certifications were to be spot checked. ~~Also~~, Some counties had not performed all the spot checks the sampling procedures required. As a result, these county offices did not obtain statistically valid information on the magnitude of incorrect acreage certifications.

In selecting farms and making quality control spot checks on the 1978 acreage certifications, one or more of the county offices had not always

- listed farms in the proper order on the farm certification register,
- used correct clearance or starting numbers,
- established correct sampling intervals or followed correct sampling intervals when they were established,
- increased sample size when required by the procedures,



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--completed verification of acreage certifications of all farms included in the sample or completed sampling all farms shown on the farm certification register, or

--identified on the farm certification register those farms on which a discrepancy had been found. (Depending on the number and sequence of discrepancies identified on the register, county office personnel are to increase the sample size.)

On May 29, 1979, we met with the Deputy Administrator, State and County Operations, and other members of your staff to discuss the above findings. We recommended that ASCS reaffirm to county offices the importance of following prescribed sampling procedures for selecting farms for quality control spot checks of acreage certifications and insure that representatives of the State offices verify that county offices have correctly followed prescribed sampling procedures.

The Deputy Administrator said that a notice would be sent to all State ASCS offices reaffirming the importance of county offices following prescribed sampling procedures and the need for the State offices to insure that the county offices have followed them.

We would appreciate being advised of the actions taken on these matters. Our upcoming report on the results of our review of the set-aside programs will discuss in more detail this and other related issues.

Sincerely yours,

Oliver W. Krueger  
Assistant Director

cc: Inspector General