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Carbon Credit enrollment nears 5.5 million acres nationwide

In 2009 nearly a million new acres were enrolled in the National Farmers Union Carbon Credit Program, bringing the total to 5.5 million acres nationwide, announced North Dakota Farmers Union President Robert Carlson. NDFU accepts enrollments from landowners in 48 states and manages the agricultural carbon offset program for all other states in the NFU organization.

Much of the newest enrollment involves native rangeland that is being managed with grazing practices that have shown to increase organic matter and carbon in the soil. Other conservation practices, such as continuous tillage and conversion of cropland to long-term grasses, also earn carbon offsets and remain popular.

“To date Farmers Union has sold nearly \$10 million worth of soil carbon offsets through the Chicago Climate Exchange,” said Carlson. “Agriculture provides an immediate and proven way to offset emissions of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas.”

NDFU has historically sold its pool of carbon credits in the spring and summer and returned proceeds to contract holders in July. This year, however, the Chicago Climate Exchange market has been slow so NDFU anticipates disbursing proceeds later than usual. “It’s a lot like marketing durum,” says Dale Enerson, the Carbon Credit Program director. “You know it’s in the bin and you can wait for a better price.”

The farm organization took the lead on developing its Carbon Credit Program for farmers and ranchers. “I want to assure you that we are committed to this program and that we will be in it for the long haul regardless of the price,” added Carlson. “Markets go up and down, as those of us in agriculture know very well. We believe this program will continue to pay farmers and ranchers for their efforts to mitigate climate change.”

Congress is considering climate change policy that may incorporate agricultural offsets. “We are working to make sure any climate change policy recognizes programs that already have proven to be successful,” said Carlson.