

For Immediate Release

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Sign-up begins March 26, 2012

Sign-up ends April 18, 2012

USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS) EXPANDS PROJECT TO CONTROL PIGWEED ON COTTON CROPS

ATHENS, GA March 16, 2012 – State Conservationist James Tillman, Sr., announced that USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Georgia will provide an additional \$1.1 million in financial incentives for an initiative in the currently participating counties of Bibb, Crawford, Dooley, Houston, Macon, Peach, Pulaski, Taylor and Wilcox, to control glyphosate-resistant palmer amaranth, more commonly known as pigweed. This project area has received approval for expansion to include the counties of Appling, Atkinson, Ben Hill, Berrien, Calhoun, Coffee, Colquitt, Cook, Crisp, Irwin, Lanier, Lee, Lowndes, Mitchell, Schley, Sumter, Tift, Telfair, Turner, and Worth. Applications must be received by April 18, 2012 to be considered for funding.

"Just when boll weevil has all but disappeared, pigweed has come on strong. It makes kudzu look like a slow moving redwood tree, having spread from just one county in 2004 to 37 counties today and each plant produces hundreds of thousands of seeds. At present, pigweed costs Georgia producers more than \$100 million each year. This strategic investment will help identify ways to combat this costly pest and deliver savings to producers and consumers alike. I appreciate the Administration for identifying this funding and will continue working with the NRCS and with Congressman Bishop on this important issue," said Congressman Jack Kingston, Chairman of the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee.

The project is being funded via the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and is targeted to cotton farmers. Pigweed is particularly troublesome to cotton crops. Congressmen Sanford Bishop, Jr., said, "Georgia is home to some of the world's strongest and most innovative cotton producers. In order to maintain and enhance their yield and increase their profit margins by retarding the spread of pigweed in their fields, it is extremely important that eligible cotton farmers in the designated counties will now have these additional resources, thanks to the NRCS pigweed resistance initiative."

This is a partnership project among the NRCS, the Georgia Cotton Commission and the UGA-Cooperative Extension Service.

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Helping People Help the Land

Participants will work with NRCS to design a conservation plan and agree to implement several practices that will assist with the control of the glyphosate-resistant pigweed.

General Criteria:

1. Participants must meet the regular EQIP eligibility requirements.
2. Individuals, groups of landowners or non-government organizations are eligible but must have evidence of control or ownership of land.
3. Payment rate will be up to \$75.00 per acre for two years.
4. The contracts are for three years with a minimum of 100.0 acres of cropland owned and a maximum of \$13,000 per contract.

Interested producers should contact their local USDA Service Center for additional information. More information is available at: www.ga.nrcs.usda.gov.

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