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NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE

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CORN ACRES EXPECTED TO SOAR IN 2007, USDA SAYS Ethanol, Export Demand Lead to Largest Planted Area in 63 Years

Washington, March 30, 2007 – Driven by growing ethanol demand, U.S. farmers intend to plant 15 percent more corn acres in 2007, according to the *Prospective Plantings* report released today by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). Producers plan to plant 90.5 million acres of corn, the largest area since 1944 and 12.1 million acres more than in 2006.

Expected corn acreage is up in nearly all states, due to favorable prices fueled by increased demand from ethanol producers as well as strong export sales. Illinois farmers intend to plant a record 12.9 million corn acres this spring, up 1.6 million acres – or 14.2 percent – from 2006. Record-high acreage is also expected in Minnesota, North Dakota, California and Idaho. Iowa continues to be the largest corn acreage state with 13.9 million acres, up 1.3 million acres – or 10.3 percent – from 2006.

The increase in intended corn acres is partially offset by a decrease in soybean acres in the Corn Belt and Great Plains, as well as fewer expected acres of cotton and rice in the Delta and Southeast. U.S. farmers plan to plant 67.1 million acres of soybeans, the lowest total since 1996 and a decrease of 8.4 million acres – or 11 percent – from 2006. Area planted to cotton is expected to total 12.1 million acres, down 20 percent from 2006.

Area intended for rice is estimated at 2.64 million acres, down 7 percent from 2006 and down 22 percent from 2005. If realized, this would be the lowest planted acreage since 1987. Expected acreage of long grain rice, which represents 76 percent of total rice acres, is down 8 percent from last year. Producers of long grain rice were affected by USDA's March 5 ban on the planting of Clearfield CL131 after unapproved genetic material was found in the seed stock.

All wheat planted area is expected to increase 5 percent from 2006, to 60.3 million acres. Winter wheat acreage is up 10 percent and durum wheat is up 6 percent, while other spring wheat is down 7 percent. Other crops with expected acreage increases are sorghum, up 9 percent, and canola, up 12 percent, and barley, up 7 percent from last year's record low.

The *Prospective Plantings* report provides the first official estimates of U.S. farmers' planting intentions for 2007. NASS's acreage estimates are based on surveys conducted during the first two weeks of March from a sample of more than 86,000 farm operators across the United States. Following USDA's March 5 ban on the planting of Clearfield CL131 rice seed, NASS attempted to verify the planting intentions of producers who, prior to March 5, indicated their intent to plant long grain rice.

Prospective Plantings and all other NASS reports are available online at www.nass.usda.gov.

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