



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
1325 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3283

Dear NWS Agricultural Weather Services Customers:

In July 1995, the National Weather Service (NWS) announced its plan to transfer several tailored weather services from the NWS to the private sector as part of proposed federal budget reductions in fiscal 1996. This action is part of an effort to reinvent government and reduce government spending by reducing the number of federal employees and by turning over certain government services to the private sector. As a result, the NWS will end its specialized agricultural weather forecasts on April 1, 1996.

Originally, the NWS intended to privatize these tailored agricultural weather services on October 1, 1995, the beginning of the 1996 Fiscal Year. The NWS extended these services when the 1996 Appropriations Bill noted that "it may be necessary within funds available to provide Agricultural Weather Services for a limited time." Therefore, as a service to our customers, the NWS has and will continue providing routine agricultural forecasts until April 1, 1996 and Fruit Frost Forecasts that have already commenced until April 20, 1996. At that time, the funds available for tailored agricultural weather services will be exhausted. If a freeze or very cold weather is in progress on April 20, 1996, fruit frost products will continue until the episode ends.

The NWS intended the extension of these services from October 1, 1995 through April 20, 1996 to minimize the disruption of critical forecasts to those regions of the United States currently receiving tailored agricultural weather services. The NWS hopes that this extension also has allowed customers an opportunity to find alternative private services.

The NWS has made a concerted effort since July 1995 to notify our customers of changes to our tailored agricultural weather service products. Letters were sent to agricultural organizations informing them that significant programmatic changes were proposed and were scheduled to take effect October 1, 1995. To assist our customers, the NWS Office of Industrial Meteorology produced a [Directory of U.S. Private Weather Services](#) which is constantly updated and can be accessed on the Internet at <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/im/>. A hard copy of the directory was disseminated to agricultural weather service customers nationwide to assist growers in finding alternative sources for weather forecasting services after October 1, 1995. Directories are still available through your local NWS office.

The NWS will make every effort to maintain agricultural weather observation networks in the months ahead. The inventory of NWS weather observing equipment will be examined closely to determine what data sources will remain available for use by private meteorologists. The NWS will continue observations and records pertaining to recording and predicting the nation's climate and for other programs such as public forecasts and warnings. The basic data critical to making agricultural forecasts is still available to all users such as freeze and frost warnings.

The continuing, strong relationship between the NWS and the private sector offers both industry and the general public more accurate and timely weather products. An effective partnership allows each sector to perform specific functions while avoiding unnecessary duplication or competition.

If you have any questions regarding the elimination of the agricultural weather service program, please contact the NWS Office of Industrial Meteorology (301-713-0258). Information about NWS programs is also available through the Internet at <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/>.

Sincerely,

NWS Office of Industrial Meteorology

