

A photograph of an older man and a young girl standing in a field of tall grain, holding hands and looking towards a bright sunset. The man is wearing a dark cap, a plaid shirt, and overalls. The girl is wearing a pink and white plaid shirt. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The text 'AACI in Action' is overlaid in white, with a red underline under the word 'Action'.

AACI in Action



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



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Despite the lingering effects of the pandemic, AACI continues to move forward with ways to stay engaged with both our members and policymakers in Washington. We are keeping up with the latest developments on legislation and regulations that could have an impact on crop insurance and the farmers and ranchers who depend on this vital tool.

This edition highlights some of our recent activity such as our first virtual spring fly-in where we visited with new USDA officials, agriculture committee leadership, and other members of Congress to advance support for crop insurance.

During the fly-in, we were also able to launch the first course of our inaugural leadership development program, *Seeding the Future*. Twelve leadership class participants learned more about the history of the federal crop insurance program and the AACI organization.

We are also showcasing the new leadership at the House and Senate Agriculture Committees with submitted profiles from the four principals.

We want to thank you for your continued support and participation in AACI. Your efforts and involvement make the difference.

SCOTT GRAVES
President





Virtual Spring Fly-In

Over the month of May, AACI members completed the association's first ever virtual fly-in and met with USDA officials and Members of both the House and Senate Agriculture Committees.

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During the first day, RMA Acting Administrator Richard Flournoy and his staff provided an update on the agency's work and expectations for the upcoming year. RMA staff also answered several questions from AACI members and offered to follow up with additional information.

The next day AACI heard from two members of the House Agriculture Committee, Ranking Member Glenn 'GT' Thompson (R-PA) and Subcommittee Chairwoman Cheri Bustos (D-IL). Both Members expressed their strong support for the federal crop insurance program and the need to educate new members about the importance of the program to their state and/or district. They also shed some light on their personal priorities, which overlapped in areas such as the need for better broadband in rural areas.

To close out the first week, members had an opportunity to meet with Gloria Montano Greene, the newly appointed Deputy Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC). Deputy Under Secretary Greene provided an outline of FPAC's priorities under a Biden Administration, but noted that the President's nominee for FPAC

Under Secretary, Robert Bonnie, will have the final decision. In addition to her updates, Ms. Greene also fielded several questions and said she would pass along specific information to the appropriate people at USDA.

Over weeks two and three of the virtual fly-in, AACI staff set up meetings with nearly every Senate member (or their staff) who sits on the Senate Agriculture Committee. AACI members used their time in these meetings to discuss the importance of the federal crop insurance program and answer any questions from Senators and their staff.

Some of the notable Senators that AACI met with include Senator John Hoeven (R-ND), Senators Joni Ernst (R-IA) and Chuck Grassley (R-IA), Senator Roger Marshall (R-KS), Senator John Thune (R-SD), and Senator Mike Braun (R-IN). In addition to those, AACI also met with both the Majority and Minority staff on the Senate Agriculture Committee, as well as with the staff of several newly elected members, such as Senators Ralph Warnock (D-GA) and Tommy Tuberville (R-AL). In the end, AACI members and staff had successful meetings with 21 out of the 22 offices on the Senate Agriculture Committee.

If you have interest in participating in future AACI fly-ins, please contact Matt Valesko (matt@conawaygraves.com).

Seeding the Future Inaugural Class Completed First Course

As part of AACI's virtual spring fly-in, AACI held the first course of their inaugural leadership development program, *Seeding the Future*. As part of the first course, which is titled History & Mission, the 12 leadership class participants heard from several speakers to understand the history of the federal crop insurance program and AACI.

First, the group heard from Dr. Bart Fischer, who currently serves as Co-Director of the Agricultural & Food Policy Center at Texas A&M University. Prior to Texas A&M, Dr. Fischer worked on Capitol Hill as the House Agriculture Committee's chief economist and deputy staff director. Dr. Fischer walked AACI's leadership class through the history of the federal crop insurance program, beginning with its inception in the 1930s all the way to current times. During this, he highlighted some of the major changes that occurred during several farm bills and other legislative measures and provided context as to why those changes were made. He also touched on his personal experience working with the industry during his time on the Hill to push back against attacks on crop insurance and other aspects of agriculture policy.

Following Dr. Fischer's presentation, the leadership class heard from three individuals who held positions as AACI staffers dating back to the association's early days in the 1980s. Each of these individuals provided some insight regarding the specific role that AACI played in terms of the development of the federal crop insurance program. They also gave an overview regarding how the association has changed over the years, as well as what steps were taken to improve and enhance AACI, such as adding the agent/agency membership division. They also spoke about the AACI-PAC and how it became one of AACI's most critical tools to ensure there is support for the federal crop insurance program among Members of Congress and their staff.

AACI plans to hold the second course of their leadership development program later this fall in Washington, DC. In course two, participants will learn about policy development and implementation through legislative and executive branch decision-makers as well as other leaders of agricultural and conservation organizations. Those interested in learning more about AACI's leadership program can contact Matt Valesko (matt@conawaygraves.com).



USDA UPDATES

RMA Improves Livestock Crop Insurance Policies with New Options

April 28, 2021 — USDA announced that it is updating livestock insurance policies to improve options for producers and to create additional opportunities for producers to participate. RMA's updates to the Dairy Revenue Protection (DRP) and Livestock Gross Margin (LGM) policies will be effective for the 2022 and succeeding crop years.

Updates to DRP

DRP has been RMA's most successful livestock product. In just its second year, it covered about 30% of milk production. It provided critical protection against unexpected decreases in prices, due to COVID and other causes, paying around \$478 million to dairy producers. The changes for the 2022 crop year include:

- Ensuring the Class Pricing Option remains available for purchase even when either the Class III or Class IV milk price is not published.
- Relaxing records requirements by allowing monthly total pounds of milk and milk components (butterfat and protein) to be acceptable records instead of daily.
- Modifying weekend sales period to end on Sunday at 9 a.m. Central Time.

Updates to LGM

LGM is available for cattle, dairy, and swine producers and provides protection against loss of gross margin (market value of livestock minus feed costs). The LGM programs have also seen an increase in participation over the last year. The total insured livestock and livestock products increased approximately 103% from 2019 to 2020. The changes for the 2022 crop year include allowing producers to purchase coverage on a weekly basis instead of monthly, which will allow producers to be more effective at managing the risks to their operations.

Link: <https://www.rma.usda.gov/News-Room/Press/Press-Releases/2021-News/USDA-Improves-Livestock-Crop-Insurance-Policies-with-New-Options>



Producers with Crop Insurance to Receive Premium Benefit for Cover Crops

June 1, 2021 — Agricultural producers who have coverage under most crop insurance policies are eligible for a premium benefit from the USDA if they planted cover crops during this crop year. The Pandemic Cover Crop Program (PCCP), offered nationally by USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA), helps farmers maintain their cover crop systems, despite the financial challenges posed by the pandemic.

About the Premium Benefit

PCCP provides premium support to producers who insured their spring crop with most insurance policies and planted a qualifying cover crop during the 2021 crop year. The premium support is \$5 per acre, but no more than the full premium owed. All cover crops reportable to FSA are eligible and include cereals and other grasses, legumes, brassicas and other non-legume broadleaves, and mixtures of two or more cover crop species planted at the same time.

Link: <https://www.rma.usda.gov/News-Room/Press/Press-Releases/2021-News/Producers-with-Crop-Insurance-to-Receive-Premium-Benefit-for-Cover-Crops>



USDA Expands and Renews Conservation Reserve Program in Effort to Boost Enrollment and Address Climate Change

April 21, 2021 — Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that USDA will open enrollment in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) with higher payment rates, new incentives, and a more targeted focus on the program's role in climate change mitigation. Additionally, USDA is announcing investments in partnerships to increase climate-smart agriculture, including \$330 million in 85 Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) projects and \$25 million for On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials. Secretary Vilsack made the announcement today at the White House National Climate Task Force meeting to demonstrate USDA's commitment to putting American agriculture and forestry at the center of climate-smart solutions to address climate change.

Link: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/news-room/news-releases/2021/usda-expands-and-renews-conservation-reserve-program-in-effort-to-boost-enrollment-and-address-climate-change>

In Historic Move, USDA to Begin Loan Payments to Socially Disadvantaged Borrowers under American Rescue Plan Act Section 1005

May 21, 2021 — The FSA today published the first notice of funding availability (NOFA) announcing loan payments for eligible borrowers with qualifying direct farm loans under the American Rescue Plan Act Section 1005. The official NOFA will be published in the Federal Register and USDA expects payments to begin in early June and continue on a rolling basis. A subsequent notice addressing guaranteed loan balances and direct loans that no longer have collateral and have been previously referred to the Department of Treasury for debt collection for offset, will be published within 120 days.

Link: <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2021/05/21/historic-move-usda-begin-loan-payments-socially-disadvantaged>

USDA to Invest More Than \$4 Billion to Strengthen Food System

June 8, 2021 — Citing lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and recent supply chain disruptions, the USDA announced plans to invest more than \$4 billion to strengthen critical supply chains through the Build Back Better initiative. The new effort will strengthen the food system, create new market opportunities, tackle the climate crisis, help communities that have been left behind, and support good-paying jobs throughout the supply chain. Today's announcement supports the Biden Administration's broader work on strengthening the resilience of critical supply chains as directed by Executive Order 14017 America's Supply Chains. Funding is provided by the American Rescue Plan Act and earlier pandemic assistance such as the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.

Link: <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2021/06/08/usda-invest-more-4-billion-strengthen-food-system>



USDA to Begin Payments for Producers Impacted by 2018 and 2019 Natural Disasters

June 11, 2021 — More than \$1 billion in payments will be released over the next several weeks starting June 15 for agricultural producers with approved applications for the Quality Loss Adjustment (QLA) Program and for producers who have already received payments through the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus (WHIP+). These USDA programs provide disaster assistance to producers who suffered losses to 2018 and 2019 natural disasters. All producers receiving QLA Program and WHIP+ payments are required to purchase federal crop insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage for the next two available crop years at the 60% coverage level or higher.

Link: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/news-room/news-releases/2021/usda-to-begin-payments-producers-impacted-by-2018-and-2019-natural-disasters>

USDA Announces Dates for Conservation Reserve Program General and Grasslands Signups

June 14, 2021 — The USDA has set a July 23, 2021, deadline for agricultural producers and landowners to apply for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) General signup 56. Additionally, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will accept applications for CRP Grasslands from July 12 to August 20. This year, USDA updated both signup options to provide greater incentives for producers and increase its conservation benefits, including reducing the impacts of climate change. Both signups are competitive and will provide for annual rental payments for land devoted to conservation purposes.

Link: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/news-room/news-releases/2021/usda-announces-dates-for-conservation-reserve-program-general-and-grasslands-signups>

USDA Announces Additional Aid to Ag Producers and Businesses in Pandemic Assistance for Producers Initiative

June 15, 2021 — Secretary Tom Vilsack announced additional aid to agricultural producers and businesses as part of the USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative. Earlier this year, Secretary Vilsack announced plans to use available pandemic assistance funds to address a number of gaps and disparities in previous rounds of aid. As part of the Pandemic Assistance initiative announced in March, USDA pledged to continue Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) payments and to provide aid to producers and businesses left behind. Implementation of the assistance announced today will continue within 60 days to include support to timber harvesters, biofuels, dairy farmers and processors, livestock farmers and contract growers of poultry, assistance for organic cost share, and grants for PPE.

Link: <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2021/06/15/usda-announces-additional-aid-ag-producers-and-businesses-pandemic>

USDA Publishes Federal Register Notice for Public Input on Racial Justice and Equity

June 16, 2021 — The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) published a Federal Register Notice requesting public input on its efforts to advance racial justice and equity across the Department. The Notice represents an important step towards implementing President Biden's Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government (EO). The information gained through this Notice and public listening sessions will aid in identifying barriers that people of color, underserved communities, and others may face in obtaining information on USDA programs and services, engaging with USDA staff, and accessing, enrolling, and participating in programs and services including USDA grant, loan, and other financial assistance programs.

Link: <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2021/06/16/usda-publishes-federal-register-notice-public-input-racial-justice>

USDA Reminds Producers to File Crop Acreage Reports

June 16, 2021 — Agricultural producers who have not yet completed their crop acreage reports after planting should make an appointment with their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office before the applicable deadline. July 15 is a major deadline for most crops, but acreage reporting deadlines vary by county and by crop. An acreage report documents a crop grown on a farm or ranch and its intended uses. Filing an accurate and timely acreage report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage and prevented planted acreage, can prevent the loss of benefits. To file a crop acreage report, you will need to provide: Crop and crop type or variety; Intended use of the crop; Number of acres of the crop; Map with approximate boundaries for the crop; Planting date(s); Planting pattern, when applicable; Producer shares; Irrigation practice(s); Acreage reverted from planting, when applicable; and other information as required.

Link: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/news-room/news-releases/2021/usda-reminds-producers-to-file-crop-acreage-reports?cs-from=87049401-a559-48a5-b224-f96381498a85>

Farm Service Agency Now Accepting Nominations for County Committee Members

June 22, 2021 — USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) began accepting nominations for county committee members on June 15. Elections will occur in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA) for these members who make important decisions about how federal farm programs are administered locally. All nomination forms for the 2021 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by Aug. 2, 2021. Producers who participate or cooperate in a USDA program, and reside in the LAA that is up for election this year, may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee. Individuals may nominate themselves or others and qualifying organizations may also nominate candidates. USDA encourages minority producers, women and beginning farmers or ranchers to nominate, vote, and hold office.

Link: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/news-room/news-releases/2021/farm-service-agency-now-accepting-nominations-for-county-committee-members>

RMA Strengthens Insurance Policies Including Dry Beans, Dry Peas and Wheat

June 30, 2021 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is making improvements to crop insurance to better enable agricultural producers to manage risk on their operations. Specifically, USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) is adding new options for producers of dry beans, dry peas, and small grains,

such as wheat, as well as making other adjustments that make crop insurance more accessible for organic producers and veteran farm families.

RMA is accepting comments for 60 days each on these changes on all three rules: Dry Beans and Dry Peas, Small Grains, and ARPI Regulations and CCIP Basic Provisions. Additionally, on the Small Grains Regulation, RMA is inviting comments on whether to allow replanting payments in situations where damage occurs prior to the fall final planting date in counties where winter and spring small grains coverage is available. Comments can be made through [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov) or by mail.

Link: <https://www.rma.usda.gov/en/News-Room/Press/Press-Releases/2021-News/RMA-Strengthens-Insurance-Policies-Including-Dry-Beans-Dry-Peas-and-Wheat>

Producers Can Now Hay, Graze and Chop Cover Crops Anytime and Still Receive Full Prevented Planting Payment

July 6, 2021 – Agricultural producers with crop insurance can hay, graze or chop cover crops for silage, haylage or baleage at any time and still receive 100% of the prevented planting payment. Previously, cover crops could only be hayed, grazed or chopped after November 1, otherwise the prevented planting payment was reduced by 65%.

RMA added this flexibility as part of a broader effort to encourage producers to use cover crops, an important conservation and good farming practice. Cover crops are especially important on fields prevented from planting as they help reduce soil erosion and boost soil health.

RMA recognizes that cover crops are not planted as an agricultural commodity but rather with the primary purpose for conservation benefits. For the 2021 crop year and beyond, RMA will not consider a cover crop planted following a prevented planting claim to be a second crop. But RMA will continue to consider a cover crop harvested for grain or seed to be a second crop, and it remains subject to a reduction in the prevented planting indemnity in accordance with the policy.

Link: <https://www.rma.usda.gov/en/News-Room/Press/Press-Releases/2021-News/Producers-Can-Now-Hay-Graze-and-Chop-Cover-Crops-and-Still-Receive-Full-Prevented-Planting-Paymnt>

RMA Authorizes Emergency Procedures to Help Drought-Impacted Producers

July 13, 2021 – USDA announced that they are authorizing emergency procedures to help agricultural producers impacted by extreme drought conditions. USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) is working with crop insurance companies to streamline and accelerate the adjustment of losses and issuance of indemnity payments to crop insurance policyholders in impacted areas. These new crop insurance flexibilities are part of USDA's broader response to help producers impacted by drought, in the West, Northern Great Plains, Caribbean and other areas.

Emergency procedures allow insurance companies to accept delayed notices of loss in certain situations, streamline paperwork, and reduce the number of required representative samples when damage is consistent. These flexibilities will reduce burdens on both insurance companies and producers to help mitigate drought effects.

Link: <https://www.rma.usda.gov/en/News-Room/Press/Press-Releases/2021-News/RMA-Authorizes-Emergency-Procedures-to-Help-Drought-Impacted-Producers>



Rep. David Scott

Elected: U.S. House of Representatives in 2002

Leadership: Chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture

Other Committees: Financial Services

I am honored to serve as Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture and specifically the first African American to lead this committee. I take this leadership role seriously to advocate for policies that benefit all American farm families – ever mindful to ensure that Black Americans are not discriminated against.

I was born on my grandparents' farm in rural Aynor, South Carolina during the days of segregation and I worked on their farm when my parents moved north to find work. African Americans were the pioneer farmers, plowing the fields, cropping, and harvesting. It is important to keep this history in front of us.

Agriculture plays a vital role in the success of our country, and I am working every day to protect the interests of farmers, ranchers, and agri-business, and ensure that America's agriculture sector continues to grow and remains globally competitive. This includes advancing priorities for trade, disaster aid, climate change, sustainable agriculture, SNAP, crop insurance, small family farms, specialty crops, and rural broadband. The fault lines dividing our rural and urban communities are running deep, and climate change is now threatening our nation's food supply. I am working with my colleagues to rise up and meet these challenges.

“

I take this leadership role seriously to advocate for policies that benefit all American farm families – ever mindful to ensure that Black Americans are not discriminated against.



Rep. Glenn “GT” Thompson

Elected: U.S. House of Representatives in 2009

Leadership: Ranking Member of the House Committee on Agriculture

Other Committees: Education and Labor

Our farmers, ranchers, and growers are the foundation of this great nation, and they play an essential role in the lives of everyday Americans. In Pennsylvania, agriculture is the number one industry and plays a key role in economic development throughout the 15th District and the broader Commonwealth.

As a descendant of a long line of dairy farmers and a lifelong resident of a small town in rural Central Pennsylvania, I am proud to serve as the Republican Leader of the House Agriculture Committee.

Farm families are facing a number of challenges and it is important that we keep them at the top of our minds and ensure our country has safe and affordable food supply.

To that end, crop insurance is a key to their success, and it is one of the best examples of a public-private partnership. When disasters strike, farmers need reliable assistance and there is no better example of a program that responds quickly when needed than crop insurance. We must do no harm to this critical part of the existing safety net as we lay the groundwork for the next Farm Bill.

Additionally, we must work together to restore a robust economy, expand new markets for U.S. agricultural products, and build resiliency within the agriculture food chain to prevent and mitigate potential disruptions from crises like the recent global pandemic.

I look forward to working with my colleagues and AACI members to ensure that those who produce our food and fiber have the tools they need to be successful.

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Farm families are facing a number of challenges and it is important that we keep them at the top of our minds and ensure our country has safe and affordable food supply.



Sen. Debbie Stabenow

Elected: U.S. Senate in 2000; U.S. House of Representatives in 1996

Leadership: Chairwoman of the U.S. Senate Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry Committee from 2011-2014, returned as Chairwoman 2021

Other Committees: TBD

From bad weather to volatile markets, farming is one of the riskiest businesses out there – which is why farmers need a strong safety net. Crop insurance is one of the most important components of that safety net, and that's why I strongly support it.

As Chairwoman of the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee, I am proud to be a champion for producers and rural communities in my home state of Michigan and across the country. When I talk to our farm families, one thing they all tell me is they're looking for certainty and commonsense tools like crop insurance to help manage their risk.

As Chairwoman and Ranking Member during the last two farm bills, I worked to strengthen the farm safety net and expand crop insurance to improve access for a more diverse range of producers and crops. In Michigan, that's especially important for our specialty crop growers who have been hit hard by the climate crisis. As volatile weather increases, crop insurance for cherries and other specialty crops is critical to keep their operations afloat. In fact this year, many of our Michigan cherry growers tell me that if it weren't for crop insurance, the extreme swings in the weather would have wiped them out entirely.

As all our farmers and ranchers deal with the impacts of the climate crisis, USDA and the crop insurance industry can provide valuable information to help producers better understand agronomic practices that improve soil health and reduce the risk of crop loss.

As we look to the next Farm Bill, it is vital to continue strong investments to provide certainty and risk management for farm families. That means strengthening federal crop insurance so that it benefits producers of all sizes, regions and crops. I look forward to working in a bipartisan way with my colleagues and the members of AACI to make that happen.

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As we look to the next Farm Bill, it is vital to continue strong investments to provide certainty and risk management for farm families.



Sen. John Boozman

Elected: U.S. Senate in 2010; U.S. House of Representatives in 2001

Committees: Small Business; Transportation & Infrastructure

Leadership: Ranking Member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

Other Committees: Appropriations; Environment and Public Works; Veterans' Affairs

The Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry has a well-deserved reputation as being among the most bipartisan places on Capitol Hill. It is a place where committee members actually sit down around a table, hash out our differences and create policy that is good for American agriculture.

The result of the collaborative approach which has traditionally defined the committee's work is perhaps best exemplified by the record amount of "yea" votes cast in the Senate for the 2018 Farm Bill.

My pledge as the new Ranking Member on the committee is to continue that spirit of cooperation with colleague Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) as we work together to address the many challenges facing our agricultural producers and rural America. At the top of that list is the impact of the pandemic on the agriculture community. There are many concerns and vulnerabilities that remain to be addressed.

The effect the pandemic had on the supply chain should renew our focus on policies that bolster food production, reduce the barriers producers face and ensure that goods get from farm to shelf in an efficient manner because it's not if, but when another crisis of this magnitude emerges.

Our agenda outside of pandemic response is just as full. Despite recent rises in commodity prices, agricultural producers are still struggling from the tough economic times they have faced over the last several years.

We have to keep that in mind as we gear up for the next farm bill, which will be here before we know it. We have written farm bills in good times and in bad times. Now, we are going to write one during unprecedented times. It is important to continue to support crop insurance, which is widely recognized as the underpinning of our safety net throughout the ag community.

Moreover, the best way to increase demand for American agriculture products is to open more markets for our producers and ensure our farmers and ranchers have a fair, level playing field with our competitors. We must work to build new export markets and strengthen our existing ones, as 95 percent of our consumers live outside of the United States.

We have our work cut out for us, but I am optimistic that we can put America's farmers and ranchers in a position to succeed and help rural America thrive. My colleagues and I are working toward accomplishing those goals.

“

We must work to build new export markets and strengthen our existing ones, as 95 percent of our consumers live outside of the United States.



Thank you to our PAC supporters

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