



Department of Justice

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LOCAL FARMER AND PHYSICIAN CONVICTED OF DEFRAUDING CROP LOSS DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

MONROE, La. – After approximately three hours of deliberation late yesterday afternoon, Dr. Daniel Estes Crook, a physician and farmer in Franklin and Catahoula parishes, was convicted by a federal jury of bilking the Farm Service Agency out of \$477,792.00 in federal disaster benefits and emergency loan money that were obtained based on false statements, United States Attorney Stephanie A. Finley announced today.

Crook, 54, of Mer Rouge, La., was convicted at trial on two counts of making false statements or reports to the Farm Service Agency, the successor to the Farmers Home Administration, when he submitted applications on behalf of Crook Farms Partnership for crop loss disaster benefits and emergency loan money that was designed to offset the 1998 drought. The jury also convicted Crook on six counts of trading and/or selling equipment that was collateral for another \$500,000.00 loan, of which Crook still owes \$276,161.64. The equipment was sold for \$155,100.00.

Crook faces up to 30 years in prison, a fine of up to a \$1,000,000 or both, for each count of making false statements. He faces up to five years in prison, a \$250,000 fine or both, for each count of converting mortgaged property. Sentencing is set for November 8, 2010.

The case was investigated by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Inspector General, and was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Robin S. McCoy, C. Mignonne Griffing, and Alexander Van Hook.

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