

§ 143-720. Benefits and administration of Fund for compensatory programs.

(a) Funds held in the Fund may be expended on compensatory programs as provided in this section.

(b) The Fund may provide direct and indirect financial assistance, in accordance with criteria established by the Commission and to the extent allowed by law, to accomplish the following:

- (1) Indemnify tobacco producers, allotment holders, and persons engaged in tobacco-related businesses from the adverse economic effects in this State of the Master Settlement Agreement.
- (2) Compensate tobacco producers, allotment holders, and persons engaged in tobacco-related businesses for economic loss resulting from lost quota and compensate tobacco producers for the decline in value of tobacco-related personal property assets and declining market conditions resulting from the Master Settlement Agreement in this State.
- (3) Compensate individuals displaced from tobacco-related employment in this State as a result of the adverse economic effects of the Master Settlement Agreement.
- (4) Compensate tobacco product component businesses that are (i) adversely impacted by the Master Settlement Agreement and that (ii) need financial assistance to retool machinery or equipment or to retrain workers, in order to convert to the production of new products or nontobacco use of existing products, or to effect other similar changes.

(c) Only tobacco producers, persons engaged in tobacco-related businesses, individuals displaced from tobacco-related employment, and tobacco product component businesses in this State, and holders of North Carolina tobacco allotments are eligible to apply for and receive assistance pursuant to subsection (b) of this section. Direct payments made to tobacco producers, tobacco allotment holders, and persons engaged in tobacco-related businesses shall be based on losses resulting in 1998 and thereafter. Lost quota shall be a primary determinative factor in calculating the amount of compensable economic loss for tobacco producers, allotment holders, and persons engaged in tobacco-related businesses.

(d) The Commission shall determine the priority of awards among the categories in subsection (b) of this section and within each of those categories.

(e) Financial assistance awards shall be for no more than one year at a time. An award may be renewed annually, without limitation.

(f) The Commission may require applicants to provide copies of documents necessary to determine compensable economic loss.

(g) In no event shall the amount paid to a tobacco producer or allotment holder pursuant to this Article, when combined with the amount received through the National Tobacco Grower Settlement Trust, exceed the compensable economic loss of the producer or allotment holder.

(h) The Commission may consider the criteria used for National Tobacco Grower Settlement Trust payments and may correspond with the National Tobacco Grower Settlement Trust certification entity to ensure that tobacco farmers and allotment holders are treated fairly. (2000-147, s. 3.)