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Farm Service Agency
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA Offers Disaster Assistance to Rhode Island Farmers and Livestock Producers Impacted by Drought

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WARWICK, R.I., August 11, 2022 –Agricultural operations in Rhode Island are experiencing severe and worsening drought conditions. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has technical and financial assistance available to help farmers and livestock producers recover from these devastating natural disasters. Impacted producers should contact their local USDA Service Center to report losses and learn more about program options available to assist in their recovery from crop, land, infrastructure and livestock losses and damages.

“USDA stands ready to assist in the recovery from this catastrophic flood event by helping farmers, landowners and communities clean up and restore farmland, forests and watersheds,” said Robert Bonnie, Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC). “I assure you that USDA employees are working diligently to deliver FPAC’s extensive portfolio of disaster assistance programs and services.”

USDA Disaster Recovery Assistance

Producers who experience livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality may be eligible for the [Livestock Indemnity Program](#) (LIP). To participate in LIP, producers will be required to provide verifiable documentation of death losses resulting from an eligible adverse weather event and must submit a notice of loss to their local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is apparent.

The [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program](#) (ELAP) provides eligible producers with compensation for feed losses as well as water hauling expenses associated with transportation of water to livestock and transporting livestock to forage or other grazing acres. For ELAP, producers will need to file a notice of loss within 30 days and honeybee losses within 15 days.

Livestock producers may also be eligible for the [Livestock Forage Disaster Program \(LFP\)](#) for 2022 grazing losses due to drought. FSA maintains a list of [counties eligible for LFP](#) and makes updates each Thursday.

Additionally, eligible orchardists and nursery tree growers may be eligible for cost-share assistance through the [Tree Assistance Program \(TAP\)](#) to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes or vines lost during the drought. This complements [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program \(NAP\)](#) or crop insurance coverage, which covers the crop but not the plants or trees in all cases. For TAP, a program application must be filed within 90 days.

“Once you are able to evaluate the drought impact on your operation, be sure to contact your local FSA office to timely report all crop and livestock damages and losses,” said Eric Scherer, State Executive Director for the Farm Service Agency (FSA) in Rhode Island. “To expedite FSA disaster assistance, you will likely need to provide documents, such as farm records, herd or other livestock inventory, receipts and pictures of damages or losses”

FSA also offers a variety of direct and guaranteed [farm loans](#), including operating and emergency farm loans, to producers unable to secure commercial financing. Producers in counties with a primary or contiguous disaster designation may be eligible for low-interest [emergency loans](#) to help them recover from production and physical losses. Loans can help producers replace essential property, purchase inputs like livestock, equipment, feed and seed, cover family living expenses or refinance farm-related debts and other needs. Additionally, FSA has a variety of loan servicing options available for borrowers who are unable to make scheduled payments on their farm loan debt to FSA because of reasons beyond their control.

Risk Management

Producers who have risk protection through [Federal Crop Insurance](#) or FSA’s [NAP](#) should report crop damage to their crop insurance agent or FSA office. If they have crop insurance, producers should report crop damage to their agent within 72 hours of damage discovery and follow up in writing within 15 days. For NAP covered crops, a [Notice of Loss \(CCC-576\)](#) must be filed within 15 days of the loss becoming apparent, except for hand-harvested crops, which should be reported within 72 hours.

“Crop insurance and other USDA risk management options are there to help producers manage risk because we never know what nature has in store for the future,” said Alexander Sereno, Director of RMA’s Regional Office that covers Rhode Island. “The Approved Insurance Providers, loss adjusters and agents are experienced and well trained in handling these types of events.”

Conservation

The [Emergency Conservation Program \(ECP\)](#) and [Emergency Forest Restoration Program](#) can assist landowners and forest stewards with financial and technical assistance for replacing or restoring fences as well as removing debris from farmland. FSA provides cost-share payments of up to 75% of the cost to implement approved restoration practices, and up to 90% for producers who certify as limited resource, socially disadvantaged or beginning farmers or ranchers. ECP sign-up periods will be announced by FSA county offices, but producers can submit applications before sign-up begins.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can help farmers make their operation more resilient in the face of drought in future years. Through conservation planning and practices that will improve soil health and water conservation, farmers can reduce future crop loss due to drought and enhance resiliency to changing climatic conditions. Financial help for implementing conservation practices may be available through the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#) or the [Agricultural Management Assistance \(AMA\)](#) program.

Long-term damage from drought can include forage production loss in pastures and fields and increased wind erosion on crop fields not protected with soil health practices. Producers can visit their local USDA Service Center to learn more about these impacts, potential recovery tactics and how to take steps to make their land more resilient to drought in the future.

“USDA can be a very valuable partner to help landowners with their recovery and resiliency efforts,” said Phou Vongkhamdy, NRCS State Conservationist in Rhode Island. “Our staff will work one-on-one with landowners to make assessments of the damages and develop approaches that focus on effective recovery of the land.”

Assistance for Communities

Additional NRCS programs include the [Emergency Watershed Protection \(EWP\)](#) program, which provides assistance to local government sponsors with the cost of addressing watershed impairments or hazards such as damaged upland sites stripped of vegetation by wildfire, debris removal and streambank stabilization.

Eligible sponsors include cities, counties, towns, or any federally recognized Native American tribe or tribal organization. Sponsors must submit a formal request (via mail or email) to the state conservationist for assistance within 60 days of the natural disaster occurrence or 60 days from the date when access to the sites become available. For more information, sponsors can [contact their local NRCS office](#).

In addition to EWP, Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) is another valuable service that NRCS can provide following a natural disaster. NRCS technical assistance can help producers with planning cost-effective restoration practices.

More Information

More disaster assistance information can be found on farmers.gov, including the Farmers.gov [Drought Webpage](#), [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#).

For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their [crop insurance agent](#). For FSA and NRCS programs, they should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#).

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov

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