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## Message from RI State Executive Director J. Eric Scherer

*"Land is not merely soil, it is a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants and animals."*

- Aldo Leopold, Author, philosopher, scientist and conservationist.

I had planned on addressing a few 'hot topics' this month, but as always is the case, Mother Nature has her own plans. Drought, it's been on every producer's mind from early morning to late at night. Those of you who experienced the 2020 drought, many of you planned for any future droughts with more or improved wells, more efficient irrigation systems and even changing how you were farming, more rotational crops, more organic matter being put back into the ground to improve water holding capacity, and so on. But there are some of our producers not so fortunate.



Severe weather events create significant challenges and often result in catastrophic loss for agricultural producers. Despite every attempt to mitigate risk, your operation may suffer losses. USDA offers several programs to help with recovery. **But these programs only help if you sign up for them!**

Here are ones you might want to look into NOW!

**Risk Management**

For producers who have risk protection through [Federal Crop Insurance](#) or the [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#) (NAP), we want to remind you to report crop damage to your crop insurance agent or the local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office.

### **Disaster Assistance**

USDA also offers disaster assistance programs, which is especially important to livestock, fruit and vegetable, specialty and perennial crop producers who have fewer [risk management options](#).

### **Documentation**

It's critical to keep accurate records to document all losses following this devastating cold weather event. Livestock producers are advised to document beginning livestock numbers by taking time and date-stamped video or pictures prior to after the loss.

Other common documentation options include:

- Purchase records
- Production records
- Vaccination records
- Bank or other loan documents
- Third-party certification

### **Other Programs**

The [Emergency Conservation Program](#) and [Emergency Forest Restoration Program](#) can assist landowners and forest stewards with financial and technical assistance to restore damaged farmland or forests.

Additionally, FSA offers a variety of loans available including emergency loans that are triggered by disaster declarations and operating loans that can assist producers with credit needs. You can use these loans to replace essential property, purchase inputs like livestock, equipment, feed and seed, or refinance farm-related debts, and other needs.

### **Additional Resources**

Additional details – including payment calculations – can be found on our [NAP](#), [ELAP](#), [LIP](#), and [TAP](#) fact sheets. On farmers.gov, the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#) can help you determine program or loan options.

While we never want to have to implement disaster programs, we are here to help. To file a Notice of Loss or to ask questions about available programs, contact your local USDA Service Center.

Your USDA Service Center is open for business! Please call the RI FSA County Office at 401-828-3120 Option 2, the staff is waiting to help you!

Best,

Eric Scherer

RI State Executive Director, USDA, FSA

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## Rhode Island producers urged to consider NAP risk protection coverage before crop sales deadlines



The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) encourages you to review available USDA crop risk protection options, including federal crop insurance and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage, before the applicable crop deadlines.

Federal crop insurance covers crop losses from natural adversities such as drought, hail and excessive moisture. NAP covers losses from natural disasters on crops for which no permanent federal crop insurance program is available.

**Sign-up deadlines for [FSA's Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program \(NAP\)](#) coverage for Rhode Island are as follows;**

- March 15th Annual Crops including spring or fall-seeded small grains
- September 30th Value Loss Crops; Aquaculture, Oysters, Turf Grass, Christmas trees, Floriculture (except Chrysanthemums) Mushrooms, Ginseng
- November 20th Perennial Crops, Grass, Mixed Forage, Alfalfa, Perennial Forage
- December 31st Specialty Type Crops; Honey, Maple sap

**Sign up Deadlines for Crop Insurance Under [Risk Management Agency](#) Programs.**

- March 15th Corn, Sweet Corn and Potatoes
- November 20th, Apples, Cranberries, Grapes and Peaches

You can determine if crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP by [visiting the RMA website](#).

NAP offers higher levels of coverage, from 50 to 65 percent of expected production in 5 percent increments, at 100 percent of the average market price. Producers of organics and crops marketed directly to consumers also may exercise the “buy-up” option to obtain NAP coverage of 100 percent of the average market price at the coverage levels of between 50 and 65 percent of expected production. NAP basic coverage is available at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production.

For all coverage levels, the NAP service fee is the lesser of \$325 per crop or \$825 per producer per county, not to exceed a total of \$1,950 for a producer with farming interests in multiple counties.

Beginning, underserved, veterans and limited resource farmers are now eligible for free catastrophic level coverage.

Federal crop insurance coverage is sold and delivered solely through private insurance agents. Agent lists are available at all USDA Service Centers or at [USDA's online Agent Locator](#). You can use the [USDA Cost Estimator](#) to predict insurance premium costs.

For more information on NAP, service fees, sales deadlines, contact Rhode Island USDA Service Center at 401-828-3120 Option 2 or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

Qualified veteran farmers or ranchers are eligible for a service fee waiver and premium reduction, if the NAP applicant meets certain eligibility criteria.

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## USDA searching for innovations in climate-smart agriculture and soil health



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced that it will invest \$25 million this year for the [Conservation Innovation Grants](#) (CIG) On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials program.

Through CIG, partners work to address our nation's water quality, water quantity, air quality, soil health and wildlife habitat challenges, all while improving agricultural operations. The On-

Farm Trials component of CIG supports widespread adoption and evaluation of innovative conservation approaches in partnership with agricultural producers. This year's funding priorities are climate-smart agricultural solutions, irrigation water management, nutrient management and soil health.

"Through science and innovation, we can develop solutions to tackle the climate crisis, conserve and protect our water, enhance soil health, and create economic opportunities for producers," said Terry Cosby, Chief of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). "Through On-Farm Trials, partners can work directly with farmers to test and adopt new strategies on agricultural lands, accelerating the development and application of conservation that works for producers and the land."

For FY 2022, to ensure that equity is incorporated in the planning and delivery of On-Farm Trials, at least 10 percent of the total funds available for On-Farm Trials are set aside for proposals that entirely benefit historically underserved (HU) producers. Additionally, applicants competing for the HU set-aside can waive non-federal match requirements.

Applications for On-Farm Trials are being accepted now through **September 22, 2022**. Private entities whose primary business is related to agriculture, nongovernmental organizations with experience working with agricultural producers, and non-federal government agencies are eligible to apply. For more information and to apply, visit [grants.gov](https://grants.gov) [↗](#).

### About CIG On-Farm Trials

On-Farm Trials projects feature collaboration between NRCS and partners to implement on-the-ground conservation activities and then evaluate their impact. Incentive payments are provided to producers to offset the risk of implementing innovative approaches.

The Soil Health Demonstration Trial (SHD) component of On-Farm Trials focuses exclusively on conservation practices implementation and systems that improve soil health.

A critical element of each On-Farm Trials project is evaluation. Partners must propose robust scientific approaches to their On-Farm Trials, resulting in data and analyses of the environmental, financial and, to the extent possible, social impacts of the trials.

NRCS intends to use the results of On-Farm Trials project evaluations and analyses to explore the development of new NRCS business practices, guidance documents, technical tools and conservation practice standards or modifications to existing ones.

For more information about the Conservation Innovation Grants program, visit the [NRCS website](#).

NRCS is a federal agency that works hand-in-hand with conservation districts and the people of Rhode Island to improve and protect soil, water and other natural resources. For more information, visit [www.ri.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ri.nrcs.usda.gov).

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## FSA offers safety net programs for honeybee producers



The Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers two programs that have specific safety net benefits for producers of honeybees and honey. The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) and the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) assist producers when disasters impact honey production or damage or destroy colonies, hives or honeybee feed.

NAP is designed to reduce financial losses when natural disasters result in lower yields or crop losses, including honey. NAP coverage is equivalent to catastrophic insurance, meaning it covers up to 50 percent of a producer's normal yield (must have at least a 50 percent loss) at 55 percent of the average market price. The 2018 Farm Bill reinstates higher levels of coverage, from 50 to 65 percent of expected production in 5 percent increments, at 100 percent of the average market price. Producers of organics and crops marketed directly to consumers also may exercise the "buy-up" option to obtain NAP coverage of 100 percent of the average market price at the coverage levels of between 50 and 65 percent of expected production.

The NAP service fee is the lesser of \$325 per crop or \$825 per producer per administrative county, not to exceed a total of \$1,950 for a producer with farming interests in multiple counties.

You must apply for NAP coverage by Dec. 31 prior to the year for which you're seeking coverage.

ELAP covers colony losses, honeybee hive losses (the physical structure) and honeybee feed losses in instances where the colony, hive or feed has been destroyed by a natural disaster or, in the case of colony losses, because of Colony Collapse Disorder. Colony losses must be in excess of normal mortality.

Both the NAP and ELAP programs require you to report the number of colonies you have in production to FSA by Jan. 2, 2023. You must notify FSA within 30 calendar days of changes in the total number of colonies or when honeybees are moved to another county.

For both programs, you must notify FSA within 15 calendar days of when a loss occurs or from when the loss is apparent.

To learn more about programs for honey and honeybee producers, contact Rhode Island USDA Service Center at 401-828-3120 Option 2 or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

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## Beginning farmer loan opportunity

Accessing capital to begin, extend or support an agriculture operation can be especially challenging to new producers. Farm Service Agency's "Beginning Farmer" direct and guaranteed loan programs provide an opportunity for qualified applicants to secure loans from funding set aside for producers who meet the following conditions:

- Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years
- Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm
- Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA
- Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's average size farm.

For more information contact, contact Rhode Island Farm Loan Team at 401-828-3120 Option 3 or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).



### Rhode Island USDA

60 Quaker Lane

Warwick, RI 02886

RI FSA County Office: 401-828-3120 Option 2

RI FSA Farm Loan Team: 401-828-3120 Option 3

RI FSA State Office: 401-828-3120 Option 1

RI NRCS Field Office: 401-828-1300

Risk Management Agency: 919-875-4880

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).