



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rhode Island Service Center Newsletter - February 2023

[Farm Service Agency](#) | [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) | [Risk Management Agency](#)

In This Issue:

- [Message from RI State Executive Director J. Eric Scherer](#)
- [Rolling Out Revenue Based Disaster and Pandemic Assistance Programs](#)
- [Producers in Rhode Island May be Eligible for Emergency Conservation Program Assistance](#)
- [Farmers Can Now Make 2023 Crop Year Elections, Enroll in Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs](#)
- [USDA-NRCS Announces 2023 Water Quality Improvement funding for farmers within the Sakonnet River Watershed](#)
- [Register Today for the 2023 Rhode Island Women in Agriculture Conference](#)

Message from RI State Executive Director J. Eric Scherer

“Soil is an almost magical substance, a living system that transforms the materials it encounters.”

– George Monbiot

By the time you read this newsletter, Groundhog Day 2023 (Thursday, Feb. 2) will be over, history. This is the 137th annual celebration that centers on whether Punxsutawney Phil, emerging from his burrow on Gobbler’s Knob in Pennsylvania, predicts the weather for the rest of the winter. According to legend, if Punxsutawney Phil saw his shadow, there will be six more weeks of winter weather. If he did not see his shadow, there will be an early spring.

The weather report Gobbler’s Knob when I wrote this message was looking good for an early spring. But if you are in RI, then it seems to have already arrived in January. I am betting on an early spring.



I am told weather predicting is a mix of art and science, which leaves farmers often guessing when and how to be prepared for the growing season. We just came out of a drought in 2022, and there was one in 2020 and before that, 2016 – are we seeing a pattern? I really hope not. But most farmers I know don't need to learn a lesson more than once. They cannot afford to.

USDA, FSA and its sister agencies have been working hard to address the negative impacts these natural (and unnatural, i.e. the pandemic) disasters have had on farmers. We have seen not only our 'normal' disaster relief programs come into play, but other new relief programs to help address the losses of livestock, crops and revenue.

In this issue of the newsletter, you will find two new revenue programs rolling out now. The Emergency Relief Program (ERP) Phase 2 and the Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (PARP). Sign up has already started and will end June 2, 2023.

I am urging all producers to read through this newsletter and even if you think you 'may' be eligible for help, call the County Office to find out what they can do for you.

And February 11th is 'National Make a Friend Day'. Take this opportunity to pass along this important information to someone you may not know too well who might benefit from this help, you just might make a 'new best friend' who will thank you.

Did you know

Agriculture as a Profession

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED | OCTOBER 16, 1919 | THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE

The word agriculture, derived from the Latin ager - a field plus culture, cultivation, meaning literally the cultivation of a field, the art or science of cultivating the ground, has gradually come to represent a great deal more than the original meaning was intended to convey. In Roman times, when class distinction played such a prominent part, the land was all owned by the patricians or upper class, while the actual labor of tilling the soil and its attendant duties was performed by the plebeians or lower class together with the helots or slaves. The landowner was known as the farmer and was always respected, even looked up to, but, of course, he was never supposed to perform any manual labor. Such would have been beneath his dignity, but was quite proper for his inferiors.

... Boy, have times changed!

Rolling Out Revenue Based Disaster and Pandemic Assistance Programs

Beginning January 23, 2023, agricultural producers can begin to apply for two new important programs for revenue losses, from 2020 and 2021 natural disasters or the COVID-19 pandemic. Both programs equitably fill gaps in earlier assistance.



First, you may be eligible for assistance through the [Emergency Relief Program \(ERP\)](#) Phase Two if you experienced revenue losses from eligible natural disasters in 2020 and 2021. ERP Phase Two is for producers who didn't receive assistance from ERP Phase One.

You may also be eligible for the [Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program \(PARP\)](#) if you experienced revenue losses in calendar year 2020. PARP is addressing gaps in previous pandemic assistance, which was targeted at price loss or lack of market access, rather than overall revenue losses.

Applications for both new programs are due June 2, 2023, and you can apply for both programs during your same appointment with USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Historically, FSA programs have been designed to make direct payments to producers based on a single disaster event or for a single commodity loss. For many of you, this may be the first revenue-based program that you've applied for with FSA.

Why revenue-based programs?

ERP Phase Two and PARP take a much more holistic approach to disaster assistance, ensuring that producers not just make it through a single growing season but have the financial stability to invest in the long-term well-being of their operations and employees.

In general, ERP Phase Two payments are based on the difference in allowable gross revenue between a benchmark year, representing a typical year of revenue for the producer and the disaster year – designed to target the remaining needs of producers impacted by qualifying natural disasters and avoid duplicative payments. ERP Phase Two revenue loss is based on tax years.

For PARP, an agricultural producer must have been in the business of farming during at least part of the 2020 calendar year and had a decrease in revenue for the 2020 calendar year, as compared to a typical year. PARP revenue loss is based on calendar years.

How to Apply

In preparation for enrollment, producers should gather supporting documentation including:

- Schedule F (Form 1040); and
- *Profit or Loss from Farming* or similar tax documents for tax years 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 for ERP and for calendar years 2018, 2019 and 2020 for PARP.

Producers should also have, or be prepared to have, the following forms on file for both ERP and PARP program participation:

- Form AD-2047, *Customer Data Worksheet* (as applicable to the program participant);
- Form CCC-902, *Farm Operating Plan* for an individual or legal entity;
- Form CCC-901, *Member Information for Legal Entities* (if applicable); and

- Form AD-1026 *Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification*.
- Form CCC-860, *Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification*, as certain existing permanent and ad-hoc disaster programs provide increased benefits or reduced fees and premiums.

Most producers, especially those who have previously participated in FSA programs, will likely have these required forms on file. However, those who are uncertain or want to confirm should contact the Rhode Island FSA County office at 401-828-3120 Option 1.

Yes, FSA is stepping outside of the box.

FSA is a big proponent of agricultural producers having a say in the design, implementation and delivery of the programs that directly impact their livelihoods. We also believe that some of the most creative and useful ideas for program and process improvements come from the FSA employees who administer this assistance through our network of more than 2,100 county offices. We want to thank producers across the country, along with the entire FSA workforce, for not just thinking outside of the box but also providing their input to make sure that we can improve and enhance our programs and our approach to assistance to better and more efficiently serve all producers who need our help.

Please visit Rhode Island's USDA Service Center for more information on ERP Phase Two, PARP and our full portfolio of conservation, prices support, safety-net, credit and disaster assistance programs.

Producers in Rhode Island May be Eligible for Emergency Conservation Program Assistance

The USDA Secretary of Agriculture has issued a Drought Disaster Declaration on August 15 (and August 22), 2022, thereby triggering the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) ability to provide emergency loans and disaster assistance to Rhode Island's farming community.



These efforts include providing water conservation and enhancement measures needed to permit livestock grazing of pasture and forage and supply emergency water for existing irrigation systems serving orchards and vineyards.

If you've suffered severe damage, you may be eligible for assistance under the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) administered by the Rhode Island Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Rhode Island has been approved for EC-6 (Drought) for 60 days beginning on November 15, 2022. Producers will have until **March 17, 2023**, to apply for drought program assistance through ECP.



For land to be eligible, the natural disaster must create new conservation problems that, if untreated, would:

- be so costly to rehabilitate that Federal assistance is or will be needed to return the land to productive agricultural use
- is unusual and is not the type that would recur frequently in the same area
- affect the productive capacity of the farmland
- impair or endanger the land

If you qualify for ECP assistance, you may receive cost-share levels not to exceed 75 percent of the eligible cost of restoration measures. Eligible socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers and ranchers can receive up to 90 percent of the eligible cost of restoration. No one is eligible for more than \$500,000 cost sharing per natural disaster occurrence.

If you've suffered a loss from drought, producers may contact the Rhode Island FSA County Office to request assistance.

Farmers Can Now Make 2023 Crop Year Elections, Enroll in Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs

Agricultural producers can now change election and enroll in the [Agriculture Risk Coverage \(ARC\) and Price Loss Coverage](#) programs for the 2023 crop year, two key safety net programs offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Signup began Oct. 17, 2022, and producers have until March 15, 2023, to enroll in these two programs. Additionally, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has started issuing payments totaling more than \$255 million to producers with 2021 crops that have triggered payments through ARC or PLC.



2023 Elections and Enrollment

Producers can elect coverage and enroll in ARC-County (ARC-CO) or PLC, which provide crop-by-crop protection, or ARC-Individual (ARC-IC), which protects the entire farm. Although election changes for 2023 are optional, producers must enroll through a signed contract each year. Also, if a producer has a multi-year contract on the farm and makes an election change for 2023, they must sign a new contract.

If producers do not submit their election by the **March 15, 2023** deadline, their election remains the same as their 2022 election for crops on the farm. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the farm.

Covered commodities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium and short grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

Web-Based Decision Tools

In partnership with USDA, the University of Illinois and Texas A&M University offer web-based decision tools to assist producers in making informed, educated decisions using crop data specific to their respective farming operations. Tools include:

- [Gardner-farmdoc Payment Calculator](#), a tool available through the University of Illinois allows producers to estimate payments for farms and counties for ARC-CO and PLC.
- [ARC and PLC Decision Tool](#), a tool available through Texas A&M that allows producers to obtain basic information regarding the decision and factors that should be taken into consideration such as future commodity prices and historic yields to estimate payments for 2022.

More Information

For more information on ARC and PLC, visit the [ARC and PLC webpage](#) or contact the Rhode Island County FSA Office at 401-828-3120 Option 1.

USDA-NRCS Announces 2023 Water Quality Improvement funding for farmers within the Sakonnet River Watershed

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Rhode Island is pleased to announce funding availability to help farmers improve water quality in the Sakonnet River watershed through the [National Water Quality Initiative \(NWQI\)](#). We encourage Rhode Island farmers within the watershed to submit applications for assistance by **March 3, 2023**.



“We see a positive impact – both here in Rhode Island and across the country – when we partner with farmers to deliver conservation practices to critical watersheds,” said R. Phou Vongkhamdy, NRCS Rhode Island State Conservationist. “These focused partnerships allow us to maximize the delivery of our conservation efforts and achieve greater improvements to water quality, which benefits the participating producers, the public, and our nation’s natural resources.”

[Learn more...](#)

[^ back to top](#)

Register Today for the 2023 Rhode Island Women in Agriculture Conference

Rhode Island Women in Agriculture invite farmers across Rhode Island and New England to join us for the **2023 Rhode Island Women in Agriculture Conference** to be held Tuesday, March 7, 2023, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Warwick, Rhode Island.



"We are pleased to be able to support this important conference again this year," said Rhode Island NRCS State Conservationist, R. Phou Vongkhamdy. "It provides a showcase for the accomplishments of women in agriculture throughout Rhode Island while also providing opportunities to network and learn new and best practices in agriculture."

Visit Eventbrite at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2023-rhode-island-women-in-agriculture-conference-tickets-483354515367> for details and to register! A limited number of free tickets are available for those 18 and under and enrolled in a 4-H Club or High School FFA Chapter. Chapter or Club must be input at registration. Vendors and information exhibitors, please contact Kim Coulter at 401-932-6459 or olvr1855dsl@aol.com to reserve your space for this important event.

[Learn more...](#)

[^ back to top](#)



Rhode Island USDA

60 Quaker Lane
Warwick, RI 02886

RI FSA County Office:	401-828-3120 Option 1
RI FSA Farm Loan Team:	401-828-3120 Option 2
RI FSA State Office:	401-828-3120 Option 3
RI NRCS Field Offices:	401-828-1300
RI NRCS State Office:	401-822-1813
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).