



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rhode Island Service Center Newsletter - July 2023

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Message from RI State Executive Director J. Eric Scherer

We might say that the earth has the spirit of growth; that its flesh is the soil."

– Leonardo da Vinci

USDA Offers Disaster Assistance to Agricultural Producers Impacted by Recent Frost

Agricultural operations throughout the Northeast have been significantly impacted by the recent frost this spring, and now there have been a deluge of water, more in northern New England and New York, but we in RI got our share. I want to remind producers that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA, both FSA and NRCS) has technical and financial assistance available to help farmers and livestock producers recover from these adverse weather events.

Impacted producers should contact the Rhode Island FSA County Office (see contact information at the bottom) to report losses and learn more about program options available to assist in their recovery from crop, land, infrastructure, and livestock losses and damages. Go to this site for more help [Winter Storm Preparation and Recovery Resources | Farmers.gov \[farmers.gov\]](#).



AND ...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 programs debt to the Agency because of reasons beyond their control.

More Information

Additional USDA disaster assistance information can be found on [farmers.gov](#), including USDA resources specifically for producers impacted by [winter storms](#). Those resources include the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#) and [Loan Assistance Tool](#). For FSA and NRCS programs, producers should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#). For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their [crop insurance agent](#).

AND ... Please make sure you have filed your Crop Acreage Reports, the deadline for **Annuals, Grass, Mixed Forage, Alfalfa, Fruit and Nut Trees and Perennial Crops and Perennial Forage (except Apples, Cranberries, Grapes and Peaches)** is **JULY 15th !**

USDA Reminds Producers to File Crop Acreage Reports

Agricultural producers in Rhode Island who have not yet completed their [crop acreage reports](#) after planting should make an appointment with the Rhode Island FSA County Office before the applicable deadline.

An acreage report documents a crop grown on a farm and its intended uses. Filing an accurate and timely acreage report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage and prevented planted acreage, can prevent the loss of benefits.



How to File a Report

The following acreage reporting dates are applicable in Rhode Island:

- **July 15th, Annuals, Grass, Mixed Forage, Alfalfa, Fruit and Nut Trees and Perennial Crops and Perennial Forage (except Apples, Cranberries, Grapes and Peaches)**

- September 30th, Value Loss Crops such as Aquaculture, Oysters, Floriculture, Turf grass sod, Christmas Trees, Floriculture (except Chrysanthemums) Mushrooms, Ginseng
- January 2nd, Honey (beehive colonies) and Maple Sap
- January 15th, Apples Cranberries, Grapes and Peaches

To file a crop acreage report, producers need to provide:

- Crop and crop type or variety.
- Intended use of the crop.
- Number of acres of the crop.
- Map with approximate boundaries for the crop.
- Planting date(s).
- Planting pattern, when applicable.
- Producer shares.
- Irrigation practice(s).
- Acreage prevented from planting, when applicable.
- Other information as required.

Acreage Reporting Details

The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.
- If crops are covered by the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, acreage reports should be submitted by the applicable state, county, or crop-specific reporting deadline or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

Producers should also report crop acreage they intended to plant, but due to natural disaster, were unable to because of a natural disaster.

Prevented planting acreage must be reported on form CCC-576, Notice of Loss, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and USDA's Risk Management Agency.

FSA offers continuous certification for perennial forage. This means after perennial forage is reported once and the producer elects continuous certification, the certification remains in effect until a change is made.

More Information

Producers can make an appointment to report acres by contacting the Rhode Island FSA County Office at 401-828-3120 Option 1.

Farm Service Agency Now Accepting Nominations for Farmers and Ranchers to Serve on Local County

USDA is now accepting nominations for county committee members for elections that will occur later this year. Additionally, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is unveiling a new GIS tool to make it easier for producers to participate in the nomination and election processes for county committee members, who make important decisions on how federal farm programs are administered locally. All nomination forms for the 2023 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by Aug. 1, 2023.



COC Elections will occur in **Local Administrative Areas (LAA) # 3, Washington County, Rhode Island.**

Agricultural producers may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee if they:

- Participate or cooperate in a USDA program; and
- Reside in the LAA that is up for election this year.

A cooperating producer is someone who has provided information about their farming or ranching operation to FSA, even if they have not applied or received program benefits. Individuals may nominate themselves or others and qualifying organizations may also nominate candidates. USDA encourages minority producers, women and beginning farmers or ranchers to nominate, vote and hold office.

More Information

Producers should contact the Rhode Island FSA County Office at 401-828-3120 Option 1 today to register and find out how to get involved in their county's election. To be considered, a producer must be registered and sign an [FSA-669A](#) nomination form. Nomination forms and other information about FSA county committee elections are available at fsa.usda.gov/elections.

Election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters beginning Nov. 6, 2023.

Financial Assistance Application Process Opens for USDA Farm Loan Borrowers Who Have Faced Discrimination

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the opening of the financial assistance application process for eligible farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who

experienced discrimination in USDA farm lending programs prior to January 2021. Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) directs USDA to provide this assistance. Since the law's passage, USDA has worked diligently to design the program in accordance with significant stakeholder input.

The program website, 22007apply.gov, is now open. The website includes an English- and Spanish-language application that applicants can download or submit via an e-filing portal, information on how to obtain technical assistance in-person or virtually, and additional resources and details about the program.

Farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination by USDA in its farm loan programs prior to January 1, 2021 and/or are currently debtors with assigned or assumed USDA farm loan debt that was the subject of USDA discrimination that occurred prior to January 1, 2021, are eligible for this program.

To apply, borrowers have the option to apply via the e-filing portal at 22007apply.gov or submit paper-based forms via mail or in-person delivery to the program's local offices. The application process will be open from July 7 to October 31, 2023. Under the planned timeline, applications will be reviewed in November and December, with payments reaching recipients soon thereafter. Importantly, applicants should know that the application process is not on a first come, first served, basis. All applications received or postmarked before the October 31 deadline will be considered.

To support producers throughout the application process, USDA is ensuring that organizations with extensive experience conducting outreach to farm organizations are able to support individuals who may be eligible for the program. These groups include [AgrAbility](#), [Farmer Veteran Coalition](#), [Farmers' Legal Action Group](#), [Federation of Southern Cooperatives](#), [Intertribal Agriculture Council](#), [Land Loss Prevention Program](#), [National Young Farmers Coalition](#), and [Rural Coalition](#).

Vendors operating four regional hubs are also providing technical assistance and working closely with these and other community-based organizations to conduct outreach using digital and grassroots strategies, to ensure potential applicants are informed about the program and have the opportunity to apply. These hubs are operating a network of brick-and-mortar program offices and will conduct extensive outreach about the program. Windsor Group serves farmers in the eastern regions of the U.S. and Analytic Acquisitions serves the western regions. A national administrator, Midtown Group, is responsible for program oversight and integrity, and will lead a national call-center, operate the application website - 22007apply.gov, which is now open – and review and process applications and payments. All vendors have experience in professional services, supporting government contracts, and complex program operations.

On March 1, 2023, USDA shared initial [details on how the Section 22007 program will work](#), including that the Inflation Reduction Act specifies the Secretary of Agriculture is responsible for providing this assistance through qualified nongovernmental entities, under standards set by USDA. USDA entered into agreements with vendors and cooperators in May.

In addition to the Discrimination Financial Assistance Program (DFAP) opening today, the Inflation Reduction Act also created several other programs that are helping USDA rebuild trust, address systemic issues and improve service to people who may have been

underserved by USDA in the past. Information about USDA's equity agenda and progress is available at www.usda.gov/equity.

In standing up this program, USDA has become aware of some lawyers and groups spreading misleading information about the discrimination assistance process, pressuring people to sign retainer agreements, and asking people to fill out forms with private and sensitive information. As of today, the official application process has begun and filling out an application is **free**.

No attorneys' fees will be paid to applicants or their counsel by USDA or by any other agency or department of the United States. The amount of financial assistance will not be increased for those claimants who are represented by an attorney. Applicants are not required to retain an attorney. USDA, the national administrator, and the regional hub vendors will neither recommend that any applicant retain counsel or retain a specific attorney or law firm, nor discourage an applicant from obtaining counsel or using a specific attorney or law firm. For more information, read our [fact sheet about the program timeline and ways to protect against possible scams](#).

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, promoting competition and fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, 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



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: 401-822-8813

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).