



Message from RI State Executive Director J. Eric Scherer

“Essentially, all life depends upon the soil... There can be no life without soil and no soil without life; they have evolved together.” –Dr. Charles E Kellogg, (former) Soil Scientist and Chief of the USDA’s Bureau for Chemistry and Soils

So, it’s June already and work is well on the way for many producers in getting crops in the ground, rotating pastures, repairing broken equipment, and working with Mother Nature’s unpredictable weather patterns.

Today USDA is investing in the science and quantification of carbon sequestration and greenhouse gasses so we can demonstrate the benefits of our investments in America’s agriculture. Regardless how your view why we are experiencing this ‘roller coaster’ of a ride with climate, we should all agree that carbon sequestration and good soil health is a fundamental role of agriculture. Healthy soil is nothing to take for granted. Healthy soils provide for improved production, improved water holding capacities, reduced needs for soil amendments and a host of other benefits.



If you have the time to take a break this spring (well, it will be summer by the time this field day occurs), please consider attending the [SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND SOIL HEALTH TRAILER TOUR](#).

These hands-on field workshops will use practical demonstrations to illustrate the value of healthy soil. Learn about soil health and the management practices you can implement to protect your land. Our staff will be attending and hoping that you will too.

For details on attending, contact Heidi at the RI Farm Bureau at haquinn@rifb.org. There is no fee to attend but pre-registration is required for all events. Once registered, you’ll receive more information as the event approaches.

Save the date! The soil health tour in Rhode Island will be held on Thursday, June 23rd ~ 2:00 pm at Windmist Farm - 71 Weeden Lane, Jamestown, RI 02835. This event will focus on soils for pasture and grazing livestock.

A reminder, agricultural producers in Rhode Island who have not yet completed their crop acreage reports after planting should make an appointment with our office before the applicable deadline. Please contact us at 401-828-3120 option 2.

The following acreage reporting deadlines are applicable in Rhode Island:

- May 31st Ornamental Nursery
- July 15th, Annuals, Grass, Mixed Forage, Alfalfa, Fruit and Nut Trees and Perennial Crops and Perennial Forage (except Apples, Cranberries, 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

Complete your USDA Cash Rents and Leases survey by June 21.

The data help calculate rental rates for your location and are useful in negotiating rental agreements, financial planning for your operation, and are also used in the USDA Farm Service Agency Conservation Reserve Program.

State-level data will be released Aug. 5, county-level Aug. 26, at quickstats.nass.usda.gov.

National Potato Promotion Board seeking Nominations!

The NPPB is represented by members from CT, ME and NH. These member’s terms are expiring, so if NE wants to continue to be represented, we are urging any potato growers in RI to consider submitting their names. More details below!

The USDA ARS is The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is seeking nominations for the **National Potato Promotion Board**.

Industry-funded Boards provide a framework for agricultural industries to pool their resources and combine efforts to develop new markets, strengthen existing markets, and conduct important research and promotion activities. The Board members (appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture) and Boards’ staff direct and carry out programs and day-to-day board management responsibilities. AMS provides oversight and ensures fiscal responsibility, program efficiency, and fair treatment of participating stakeholders.

Please find below the nomination solicitation notice for the Board. We ask that you direct any questions to the contact named in the notice.

- National Potato Promotion Board - [USDA Seeks Nominees for the National Potato Promotion Board | Agricultural Marketing Service](#)

For additional information please visit: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/research-promotion>

Best,

Eric Scherer

RI State Executive Director, USDA, FSA

Rhode Island FSA office is hiring



Are you interested in working for the federal government? Do you want to learn more about agriculture and give back to the community? Well, the Farm Service Agency is looking for someone like you. The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) supports the wellbeing of American agriculture and the American public. We are looking for someone who is excited to dive right in and learn about our programs, so that we can better serve the farmers in our state. We would like someone who has some farm experience or went to school for an agricultural degree, but it is not required because you will learn on the job.

The position we are looking to fill is: A full-time temporary position, not to exceed one year, with the potential to become permanent.

Job responsibilities: You will provide a wide variety of administrative and technical duties to support FSA agricultural programs, interpret and explain procedures, program regulations and forms to producers and other agency personnel.

Schedule: Monday through Friday, 8:00 am – 4:30 pm, 40 hours/week.

Salary: \$14.96 - \$16.73/hour depending on experience and education.

What are the requirements to apply for this job?

- Must Be a U.S. Citizen
- High School Graduate
- Farming Experience (preferred)

What are the benefits for working with the Federal Government?

- Vacation Time
- Sick Leave
- Federal Holidays Off

If interested, please email, or mail your resumes to:

Sheryl Michener
Sheryl.michener@usda.gov
County Executive Director
Phone: (401) – 828 – 3120 Option #2

USDA expands local, electronic communication options for producers



USDA is expanding our online communications platform that the Farm Service Agency (FSA) has used for years to now include local information from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Risk Management Agency (RMA), and other USDA agencies.

Subscribers will now receive important information on FSA, NRCS and RMA programs, eligibility requirements, deadlines, and more.

You're currently subscribed to the Rhode Island USDA Service Center newsletter and updates. News will continue to be sent via e-mail right to your home or farm office, or to your smartphone – allowing you to receive immediate notification of USDA news that applies to your agricultural operation.

You can also subscribe to text alerts from the Rhode Island USDA Service Center by texting **RIKent** Keyword to **372-669**. Standard text messaging rates apply. Contact your wireless carrier for details associated with your particular data plan. Participants may unsubscribe at any time.

For more information visit farmers.gov/working-with-us/stay-connected or for subscription assistance contact the Rhode Island USDA Service Center at 401-828-3120 Option 2.

Top 6 Emergency Relief Program Checklist Items for Eligible Farmers



FSA recently began mailing 303,000 pre-filled applications for the Emergency Relief Program (ERP), a new program designed to help agricultural producers impacted by wildfires, droughts, hurricanes, winter storms, and other qualifying natural disasters experienced during calendar years 2020 and 2021.

The past few years have been tough to say the least. As producers have dealt with the continued impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, they have also struggled to recover from more frequent, more intense natural disasters. I am grateful that Congress passed, and President Biden signed into law the *Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act* (P.L. 117-43), which includes \$10 billion in critical emergency relief.

After extensive stakeholder outreach, including with producers and groups that have not always been included in USDA programs, our team began work developing a responsive, easier-to-access program that could be rolled out in phases. We're now rolling out the first phase of ERP, which uses existing [Federal Crop Insurance](#) or [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#) (NAP) data as the basis for calculating initial payments.

By leveraging existing data, we will be able to deliver approximately \$6 billion in assistance on a faster timeline; at the same time, my team and I are committed to ensuring that producers who do not have existing data on file with USDA are captured in the second phase of ERP, which will be explicitly focused on filling gaps in previously implemented emergency assistance.

To apply for ERP Phase 1, here's what you need to do:

1. Check Your Mailbox

The form being mailed to you includes eligibility requirements, outlines the application process, and provides estimated ERP payment calculations. Producers will receive a separate application form for each program year in which an eligible loss occurred. Receipt of a pre-filled application is not confirmation that a producer is eligible to receive an ERP phase one payment. This application takes about 0.176 hours (that's less than 15 minutes) for producers to complete, compared to the former Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program – Plus application which took several hours for producers to complete and even longer for FSA staff.

The deadline to return completed ERP applications to FSA is **Friday, July 22, 2022**. *If you have NAP coverage, you will receive pre-filled ERP applications later this summer. Details on ERP Phase 2 will be forthcoming as well.*

2. Check Your Eligibility

ERP covers losses to crops, trees, bushes, and vines due to a qualifying natural disaster event in calendar years 2020 and 2021. Eligible crops include all crops for which crop insurance or NAP coverage was available, except for crops intended for grazing. Qualifying natural disaster events include wildfires, hurricanes, floods, derechos, excessive heat, winter storms, freeze (including a polar vortex), smoke exposure, excessive moisture, qualifying drought*, and related conditions.

**Lists of [2020](#) and [2021](#) drought counties eligible for ERP are available online.*

3. Check Required Forms on File with FSA

Producers must have the following forms on file with FSA:

- Form AD-2047, *Customer Data Worksheet*.
- Form CCC-902, *Farm Operating Plan* for an individual or legal entity.
- Form CCC-901, *Member Information for Legal Entities*(if applicable).
- Form FSA-510, *Request for an Exception to the \$125,000 Payment Limitation for Certain Programs*(if applicable).
- A highly erodible land conservation (sometimes referred to as HELC) and wetland conservation certification (Form AD-1026 *Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELIC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification*) for the ERP producer and applicable affiliates.

*If you have previously participated in FSA programs, you will likely have these required forms on file. However, if you're uncertain or want to confirm the status of your forms, contact **Rhode Island Farm Service Agency County Office at 401-828-3120 Option 2**.*

4. Check Historically Underserved Status with FSA, If Applicable

The ERP payment percentage for historically underserved producers, including beginning, limited resource, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers, and ranchers will be increased by 15% of the calculated ERP payment.

To qualify for the higher payment percentage, eligible producers must have the following form on file with FSA:

- Form CCC-860, *Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification*.

5. **Check Your Future Insurance Coverage**

All producers who receive ERP phase one payments are statutorily required to purchase crop insurance, or NAP coverage where crop insurance is not available, for the next two available crop years, as determined by the Secretary.

Coverage requirements will be determined from the date a producer receives an ERP payment and may vary depending on the timing and availability of crop insurance or NAP for a producer's particular crops. The final crop year to purchase crop insurance or NAP coverage to meet the second year of coverage for this requirement is the 2026 crop year.

6. **Check Your bank**

Once the completed ERP application for payment is submitted to and signed by FSA, producers who have direct deposit should look for payment within three business days.

More Information

We have additional resources, including:

- [ERP May 16, 2022 New Release](#)
- [ERP Fact Sheet](#)
- [Answers to Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)
- [Emergency Relief Webpage](#)
- [ERP Notice of Funding Availability](#)

In addition to ERP, FSA is also implementing the first phase of the new Emergency Livestock Relief Program. At this time, FSA has made more than \$588 million in payments to impacted livestock producers.

Bottom line, we take your feedback seriously, and we wanted to deliver this relief as soon as possible. We learned from previous relief programs, and we're excited to be getting this to you as swiftly as we can.

USDA advances food system transformation with \$43 million for urban agriculture and innovative production, adds new Urban County Committees

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced significant investments to support urban agriculture, including \$43.1 million for grants and cooperative agreements as well as six new urban county committees to help deliver key USDA programs to urban producers. These

actions support USDA's efforts to strengthen the food supply chain and transform the food system to be fairer, more competitive, and more resilient.

Specifically, USDA is investing \$10.2 million in new cooperative agreements to expand compost and food waste reduction efforts and \$14.2 million in new grants to support the development of urban agriculture and innovative production projects. Additionally, \$18.7 million will fund 75 worthy grant proposals from the 2021 application cycle, which was oversubscribed.

"Investing in urban agriculture innovations helps us build a fairer, more transparent food system and promote equity by increasing nutrition security and economic opportunity in underserved communities," said Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Chief Terry Cosby. "These projects will help for urban farmers create new, more affordable, and better local market options and help urban communities produce fresh and healthy food locally, reducing food waste while building nutrient rich compost."

"Supporting agriculture in our urban communities helps grow our economy and provides food to people," said U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow. "I'm proud that Michigan has been a pioneer in this effort. Urban farmers provide fresh and healthy food to children and families while creating jobs and revitalizing our neighborhoods."

These investments build on USDA's [Food Systems Transformation Framework](#) unveiled earlier this week. The goals of USDA's Food System Transformation Framework include:

- Building a more resilient food supply chain that provides more and better market options for consumers and producers while reducing carbon pollution.
- Creating a fairer food system that combats market dominance and helps producers and consumers gain more power in the marketplace by creating new, more and better local market options.
- Making nutritious food more accessible and affordable for consumers.
- Emphasizing equity by creating wealth that stays in small towns and underserved communities.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is also standing up six more urban county committees, which help deliver farm loans, disaster assistance, safety net and conservation programs.

"Urban county committees promote equity by giving urban producers a voice in creating and implementing policy and developing and designing programs specific to urban producers," FSA Administrator Zach Ducheneaux said. "These new urban county committees will work to encourage and promote urban agriculture and address areas such as food and program access, community engagement and food security."

Composting and Food Waste Reduction Cooperative Agreements

This is the third year of USDA's Composting and Food Waste Reduction (CFWR) cooperative agreements, and so far, USDA has invested \$3 million in community composting in urban areas across the country. The \$10.2 million to be awarded in 2022 will fund pilot projects that develop and implement strategies for municipal compost plans and food waste reduction plans.

Local governments may submit projects that do one or more of the following:

generate compost;

provide access to compost to farmers;

reduce fertilizer use;

improve soil quality;

encourage waste management and permaculture business development;

increase rainwater absorption; reduce municipal food waste; and/or

divert food waste from landfills.

For example, Philadelphia is launching the first of a coordinated system of small-scale urban food waste composting sites on city properties. Meanwhile, Winterville, Georgia is building six composting stalls to collect and process food excess and refuse from producers and local community members. The compost is then provided to local producers and others.

Priority will be given to projects that anticipate or demonstrate economic benefits, incorporate plans to make compost easily accessible to farmers, including community gardeners, integrate other food waste strategies, including food recovery efforts and collaborate with multiple partners. Projects should span two years.

Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP) Grants

This is also the third year of OUAIP grants, which have already provided more than \$7.5 million focused on food access, education, business and start-up costs for new farmers, and development of policies related to zoning and other needs. The \$14.2 million to be awarded in 2022 will support the development of urban agriculture and innovative production projects through:

Planning Projects that initiate or expand efforts of urban and suburban farmers, gardeners, citizens, government officials, schools and other stakeholders to target areas of food access, education, business and start-up costs for new farmers, urban forestry, and policies related to zoning and other needs of urban production.

Implementation Projects that accelerate urban, indoor and other agricultural practices that serve multiple farmers and improve local food access. They may support infrastructure needs, emerging technologies, education and urban farming policy implementation.

For example, Growing Gardens in Oregon received planning project funding to identify opportunities to meet community needs for healthy, affordable, culturally appropriate food through building greenhouses. Meanwhile, Grow Ohio Valley in West Virginia received implementation funding to set up a training and demonstration farm to support new and aspiring urban farmers.

How to Apply for Grants and Cooperative Agreements

Submit applications via [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) for [Composting and Food Waste Competitive Agreements](#) and [UAIP grants](#). Pre-recorded webinars on the purpose, project types, eligibility

and basic requirements for submitting applications will be posted at usda.gov/urban. Email UrbanAgriculture@usda.gov with any questions.

2021 OUAIP Grant Projects

Additionally, \$18.7 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds were awarded to 75 Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production grant applicants from 2021. This grant program has been oversubscribed the last several years, ARPA funds made it possible to fund these worthy projects. A full listing of project is posted on usda.gov/urban.

Urban County Committees for Urban Agriculture

The new urban county committee (UCOC) locations are Chicago, Detroit, Grand Rapids, Los Angeles, Brooklyn, and Oakland, and they join 11 previously announced urban county committees. The six locations for county committees were selected based on a consideration of data that included opportunity for economic growth, diversity, proximity to tribal nations, as well as the number of farm-to-table projects, urban farms, community and residential gardens, and green infrastructure projects within metropolitan and suburban areas,

Like rural county committee members, urban committee members make important decisions about how FSA programs are administered locally. Each urban and suburban county committee will be composed of three elected members who will serve a term of up to three years. Urban farmers who participate in USDA programs in the areas selected are encouraged to participate by nominating and voting for themselves or others.

USDA and Urban Agriculture

Grants and cooperative agreements to support urban production are part of a broad USDA investment in urban agriculture. Other efforts include \$260,000 for risk management education from USDA's [Risk Management Agency](#) (RMA) and technical and financial assistance through conservation programs offered by USDA's NRCS.

OUAIP was established through the 2018 Farm Bill. It is led by NRCS and works in partnership with FSA and numerous USDA agencies that support urban agriculture. Its mission is to encourage and promote urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural practices, including community composting and food waste reduction. Learn more by visiting farmers.gov/urban or downloading the new [Urban Agriculture at a Glance brochure](#). Additional resources that may be of interest to urban agriculture entities include grants from USDA's [Agricultural Marketing Service](#) and [National Institute of Food and Agriculture](#) as well as [FSA loans](#).

These significant investments by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP) build on the Biden-Harris administration's Food System Transformation framework for USDA to transform the food system to benefit consumers, producers and communities by providing more options, increasing access, and creating new, more, and better markets for small and mid-size producers.

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 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 [usda.gov](https://www.usda.gov).

USDA announces conservation funding opportunity for Rhode Island farmers through the Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) program



The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is announcing a financial assistance opportunity for agricultural producers to voluntarily address issues such as water management, water quality, and erosion control by incorporating conservation into their farming operations through the [Agricultural Management Assistance \(AMA\)](#) program.

While NRCS accepts applications for programs year-round, producers should apply for AMA by **June 27, 2022** to be considered for this year's funding. Applications received after the ranking date will be automatically deferred to the next funding period.

"Through AMA funds, we are helping producers mitigate and address risk by implementing practices such as constructing or improving water management structures or installing high tunnels.," said Phou Vongkhamdy, NRCS State Conservationist in Rhode Island.

The Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA) helps agricultural producers use conservation to manage risk and address natural resource issues through natural resources conservation. NRCS administers the AMA conservation provisions, while the Agricultural Marketing Service and the Risk Management Agency implement other provisions under AMA.

AMA is available in 16 states where participation in the Federal Crop Insurance Program is historically low: Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

For more information and to apply for NRCS programs, contact your local conservation district or NRCS at:

Eastern RI Conservation District
Serving Newport and Bristol counties
401-934-0842

Northern RI Conservation District
Serving Providence County
401-934-0840

Southern RI Conservation District
Serving Kent and Washington counties
401-661-5761

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
60 Quaker Lane, Suite 46
Warwick, RI 02886
www.ri.nrcs.usda.gov
NRCInfo@ri.usda.gov
401-828-1300

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.

Regenerative Pastures, Vegetable Patches and Corn Fields tour: NY's soil health trailer to visit Rhode Island



At the request of four regional agricultural stakeholders, NY's solar-powered soil health education trailer will visit farms in Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut to offer five free programs from June 20 through June 24, 2022. Attendees at the Southern New England Soil Health Trailer Tour programs will see demonstrations and learn how to regenerate soil to its natural functions for agricultural crop and livestock grazing success. Northeast SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education), the University of Massachusetts Extension, Rhode Island Farm Bureau, and the American Farmland Trust are sponsoring this soil health educational programming.

Rhode Island Farm Bureau will host the trailer's visit to the Ocean State on **Thursday, June 23, 2022, 2:00 pm at Windmist Farm, 71 Weeden Lane, Jamestown, RI.** This

program will focus on soil health for optimal grazing and pasturing management. Pre-registration is required. For more information and registration, contact haquinn@rifb.org. Registration can also be done online at <https://forms.gle/YCJVwnnMhcsmWPwY8>.

Among the demonstration features of the New York Grazinglands Coalition Soil Health Trailer is a six-foot-tall rain simulator that illustrates how well or how poorly soils retain rainwater. A soil samples table visually shows how different types of soils and soils planted with cover crops are or are not able to maintain structure to resist erosion.

"Understanding the many components of soil health is helping farms of all types be more resilient, adaptable to changing needs and weather conditions, and economically sustainable," said New York Grazinglands Coalition Soil Health Trailer Coordinator Fay Benson with the South Central New York Dairy and Field Crops Team of Cornell Cooperative Extension, Cortland County, NY.

Benson explains, “The way my father and the way I used to farm was to test the soil for nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, and pH. If they were in range, we were good to go. Research by the Natural Resources Conservation Service and others has shown that farms were losing a lot of topsoil and that, in addition to monitoring the chemical makeup of soil, farmers need to pay attention to the physical and biological components as well.”

“This soil health trailer allows people to see how soil works in real-time with a ‘seeing is believing’ impact. Soil health education is increasingly in demand, and we are pleased to share the New York Grazinglands Coalition Soil Health Trailer resourced with our New England farm neighbors,” said Benson.

Benson has recently conducted SARE-Funded research to develop a ratio tool for computing soil compaction impact on pasturelands and to monitor pasture management improvement success over time.

The New York Grazinglands Coalition Soil Health Trailer is funded through the New York office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Cornell Soil Health Lab Director Robert Schindelbeck and Cornell Soil Health Program Extension Educator Joseph Amsili provide materials and educational support. Fay Benson can be reached at Cornell Cooperative Extension Cortland County, 607-391-2660 ext. 410, afb3@cornell.edu.



Rhode Island USDA

60 Quaker Lane

Warwick, RI 02886

RI NRCS Field Office:	401-828-1300
RI FSA State Office:	401-828-3120 Option 1
RI FSA County Office:	401-828-3120 Option 2
RI FSA Farm Loan Team:	401-828-3120 Option 3
Risk Management Agency:	919-875-4880

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