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## Message from Rhode Island FSA State Executive Director J. Eric Scherer

“The soil is the great connector of lives, the source and destination of all. It is the healer and restorer and resurrector, by which disease passes into health, age into youth, death into life. Without proper care for it we can have no community, because without proper care for it we can have no life.”

*Wendell Berry*

When I read the quote above from Wendell Berry, it reminded me that one of the joys of my life has always been and will always be, seeing our working lands and waters. I have spent the greater part of my professional life in Rhode Island. I started here and plan to finish both my professional career and personal life here. But over those 50 plus years of working with farmers, nothing gives me more pleasure than seeing how well many of our farmers take on the stewardship of their soils.

Our staff are committed to helping our producers do just that, continue to be stewards of your soils. Some of you may know that we just recently lost one of our valued employees here at



the office. She was a pleasure to work with and she cared so much about her job and assisting farmers to help them achieve their goals. She will be missed, but her personal mission will indeed be continued by others at the Farm Service Agency.

The reason we bring you these monthly newsletters is to ensure that you know about programs that will help you. That's the "Service" part of our name. And I know that the 'language' we often speak is bureaucratic and can be confusing, it is to me at times, and I have been at this for a long time, so don't feel alone. Staff here will know I ask a lot of questions, and so should you.

Even if you skim the articles below and you 'think' it might apply to you, call the County Office, and ask. We just got one yesterday from one of our stakeholders who works with the commercial fishing industry to see if one of the programs recently announced applied to their members. Ask for help, clarification or just to check in. Don't let opportunities pass you by.

We are here to 'serve' you!

And one more thing, please look into this great program from RI DEM, Division of Agriculture, if you have a project in mind, please plan on attending this meeting. More information on LASA Grants can be found at <https://dem.ri.gov/agriculture/grants/lasa>.



The flyer is a rectangular graphic with a white background and a thin grey border. It features two logos at the top: the RI Food Policy Council logo on the left, which includes a stylized map of Rhode Island with various food icons, and the Southside Community Land Trust logo on the right, which consists of four colored squares (green, purple, orange, red) above the text. The main text is centered and reads: "LASA grant application information and support" in a dark blue font, followed by "All are welcome!" in a larger, bold, dark blue font. Below this, the date and time are given: "Thursday, November 9 from 6-8pm" and the location: "at 404 Broad Street, Providence, RI". A paragraph of smaller text describes the grant program's focus on supporting local agriculture and seafood. At the bottom, it states "Applications open through November 30" and provides the website "rifoodcouncil.org/business-support/lasa". The background of the flyer is a collage of images: green leafy vegetables on the left and several clams on the right.

**RI FOOD POLICY COUNCIL**

**SOUTHSIDE COMMUNITY LAND TRUST**

LASA grant application information and support  
**All are welcome!**

Thursday, November 9 from 6-8pm  
at 404 Broad Street, Providence, RI

*The Local Agriculture and Seafood Act grant program supports Agriculture, Fisheries, Aquaculture and Forestry industries by investing in Rhode Island's small and beginning farms. The goal is to support the growth, development, and marketing of local food and seafood in Rhode Island.*

Applications open through **November 30**  
[rifoodcouncil.org/business-support/lasa](https://rifoodcouncil.org/business-support/lasa)

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## USDA Reminds Producers of Fall Application Deadlines for Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)

USDA Rhode Island Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds producers of approaching application deadlines for purchasing risk coverage for some crops through the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP). NAP provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops impacted by natural disasters that result in lower yields, crop losses, or prevented crop planting.

NAP covers losses from natural disasters on crops for which no permanent federal crop insurance program is available, including forage and grazing crops, fruits, vegetables, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass and more.

The application deadline of **November 20, 2023**, for NAP crop coverage in all Rhode Island Counties for the 2024 production season include:

- Grapes (not available in all counties)
- Peaches (not available in all counties)
- Grass
- Mixed Forage
- Alfalfa
- Perennial Forage

To learn more about NAP visit [fsa.usda.gov/nap](https://fsa.usda.gov/nap) or contact the Rhode Island Farm Service Agency County Office at 401-828-3120 option 1.

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## USDA to Provide More Than \$3 Billion to Commodity and Specialty Crop Producers Impacted by 2022 Natural Disasters

The U. S Department of Agriculture (USDA) will provide more than \$3 billion to commodity and specialty crop producers impacted by natural disaster events in 2022. Eligible impacted producers can apply for financial assistance through the [Emergency Relief Program \(ERP\) 2022](#). The program will help offset the financial impacts of crop yield and value losses from qualifying disasters occurring in 2022.



## **Background**

On Dec. 29, 2022, President Biden signed into law the *Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2023 (P.L. 117-328)* that provides about \$3.7 billion in financial assistance for agricultural producers impacted by eligible natural disasters that occurred in calendar year 2022.

ERP 2022 covers losses to crops, trees, bushes and vines due to qualifying, calendar year 2022 natural disaster events including wildfires, hurricanes, floods, derechos, excessive heat, tornadoes, winter storms, freeze (including a polar vortex), smoke exposure, excessive moisture, qualifying drought and related conditions.

ERP 2022 program benefits will be delivered to eligible producers through a two-track process. FSA intends to make both tracks available to producers at the same time. This two-track approach enables USDA to:

- Streamline the application process.
- Reduce the paperwork burden on producers.
- Proactively include provisions for underserved producers who have not been well served by past emergency relief efforts.
- Encourage producer participation in existing risk management programs to mitigate the impacts of future severe weather events.

It's important to note that disaster-impacted producers may be eligible for ERP 2022 assistance under one or both tracks. To avoid duplicative benefits, if a producer applies for both tracks, the Track 2 payment calculation will take into account any payments received through Track 1.

### **ERP 2022 Application Process – Track 1**

ERP 2022 Track 1 leverages existing federal crop insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) data as the basis for calculating payments for eligible crop producers who received indemnities through these risk management programs. Although FSA is sending pre-filled ERP 2022 Track 1 application forms to producers who have crop insurance and NAP data already on file with USDA, producers indemnified for losses resulting from 2022 natural disasters do not have to wait to receive the application before requesting ERP 2022 assistance. Effective Oct. 31, 2023, producers can apply for ERP 2022 benefits whether they have received the pre-filled application or not. Receipt of a pre-filled application is not confirmation that a producer is eligible to receive an ERP 2022 Track 1 payment.

USDA estimates that ERP Track 1 benefits will reach more than 206,000 producers who received indemnities for losses covered by federal crop insurance and more than 4,500 producers who obtained NAP coverage for the 2022 crop year.

### **ERP 2022 Application Process – Track 2**

Track 2 is a revenue-based certification program designed to assist eligible producers who suffered an eligible decrease in revenue resulting from 2022 calendar year disaster events when compared with revenue in a benchmark year using revenue information that is readily available from most tax records. In cases where revenue does not reasonably reflect a normal year's revenue, Track 2 provides an alternative method for establishing revenue. Likewise,

Track 2 affords producers of crops that are used within an operation and do not generate revenue from the sale of the crop a method for establishing revenue for the purpose of applying for ERP 2022 benefits. Producers are not required to submit tax records to FSA unless requested by the County Committee if required for an FSA compliance spot check.

Although not required when applying for ERP 2022 Track 2, applicants might find the following documents useful to the process:

- Schedule F (Form 1040)
- *Profit or Loss from Farming* or similar tax documents for tax years 2018, 2019, 2022 and 2023.

Track 2 targets gaps in emergency relief assistance for eligible producers whose eligible losses were not covered by crop insurance or NAP including revenue losses too small (shallow loss) to be covered by crop insurance.

Producers interested in applying for ERP 2022 Track 2, should contact their local FSA county office. Additional reference resources can be found on FSA's [emergency relief website](https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/emergency-relief/index). <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/emergency-relief/index>

### **Additional Required Forms**

For both ERP 2022 tracks, all producers must have certain required forms on file with FSA within 60 days of the ERP 2022 deadline. Producers can apply for ERP 2022 starting Oct. 31, 2023. The application deadline has not yet been determined and will be announced at a later date. If not already on file, producers can update, complete and submit required forms to FSA at any time.

Required forms:

- 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).
- Form CCC-860, *Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification*, if applicable, for the 2022 program year.
- A highly erodible land conservation (sometimes referred to as HELC) and wetland conservation certification (Form AD-1026 *Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification*) for the ERP producer and applicable affiliates.

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 the status of their forms can contact their local FSA county office.

### **Future Insurance Coverage Requirements**



All producers who receive ERP 2022 payments must purchase crop insurance, or NAP coverage where crop insurance is not available, in the next two available crop years as determined by the Secretary. Purchased coverage must be at the 60/100 coverage level or higher for insured crops or at the catastrophic coverage level or higher for NAP crops.

### More Information

ERP 2022 eligibility details and payment calculation factor tables are available on the [emergency relief website](#), in the [ERP Track 1](#) and [ERP Track 2](#) fact sheets and by contacting the Rhode Island Farm Service Agency County Office at 401-828-3120 Option 1.

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## USDA Extends Application Deadline for Discrimination Financial Assistance Program to Jan. 13

The application period is now open for a new financial assistance program under Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), for farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination in USDA farm



lending programs prior to January 2021. The application process will close on January 13, 2024. Borrowers will have the option to apply for assistance online via [22007apply.gov](https://22007apply.gov) or through a paper-based form.

Details about the program, including an application and e-filing portal, are available at [22007apply.gov](https://22007apply.gov). 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. Applicants can also call the free call center at 1-800-721-0970, or visit one of several dozen brick-and-mortar offices the program has set up around the country. Locations are provided on the program website and vendors will update the local events schedule with more information as it becomes available. It is important to note that filing an application is FREE and does not require a lawyer.

If you want to get weekly updates on the program's events and progress, you can go to <https://22007apply.gov>, and subscribe to a weekly newsletter.

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## Farmers.gov Local Dashboard Now Available for Producers in Rhode Island

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Farmers in Rhode Island can now access county specific farming data and USDA resources all in one place via the new [farmers.gov local dashboard](https://farmers.gov/local-dashboard). Your new farmers.gov local dashboard includes farming data and USDA resources including USDA news, commodity pricing, weather forecasts, historical climate data, past storm events, USDA service center locator and additional state resources for Rhode Island. The dashboard transforms complex data sets into easy-to-read charts and graphs to help you quickly find information that matters to you.

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## Crop Insurance Deadline Nears in Rhode Island for Apples, Cranberries, Grapes, and Peaches

The USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) reminds Rhode Island apple, cranberry, grape, and peach growers that the final date to apply for crop insurance coverage for the 2024 crop year is **November 20**. Current policyholders who wish to make changes to their existing policies also have until **November 20** to do so.



Federal crop insurance is critical to the farm safety net. It helps producers and owners manage revenue risks and strengthens the rural economy. Coverage for apples, cranberries, grapes, and peaches is available in select counties. Additional information can be found on the [Actuarial Information Browser](#) page on the RMA website.

Growers are encouraged to visit their crop insurance agent soon to learn specific details for the 2024 crop year, including insurance for apples, cranberries, grapes, and peaches.

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Additional crops or counties may be eligible for coverage under a written agreement. Crop insurance coverage decisions must be made on or before the sales closing date.

RMA is authorizing additional flexibilities due to coronavirus while continuing to support producers, working through Approved Insurance Providers (AIPs) to deliver services, including processing policies, claims and agreements. RMA staff are working with AIPs and other customers by phone, mail and electronically to continue supporting crop insurance coverage for producers. On [farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov), you can find more information on [USDA's response and relief for producers](#) and use other tools and resources.

Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the [RMA Agent Locator](#). Learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at [rma.usda.gov](https://rma.usda.gov).

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, 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://usda.gov).

## Rhode Island Farm Service Agency

60 Quaker Lane

Warwick, RI 02886

County Office Main Line

401-828-3120 Option 1

Sheryl Michener, County Executive Director

401-822-8862 Ext. 1862

[sheryl.michener@usda.gov](mailto:sheryl.michener@usda.gov)

Farm Loan Team

401-828-3120 Option 2

Matthew Richter, District Director

401-822-8855 Ext. 1855

[matthew.richter@usda.gov](mailto:matthew.richter@usda.gov)



State Office Main Line

401-828-3120 Option 3

J. Eric Scherer, State Executive Director

401-822-8802 Ext. 1802

[eric.scherer@usda.gov](mailto:eric.scherer@usda.gov)

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