



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

We know more about the movement of celestial bodies than about the soil underfoot.”

- Leonardo Da Vinci, Artist and inventor

Top message for October!

It's been a long summer, longer for many of our producers who suffered from the drought and extreme heat! I have asked our County Office staff to continue to outreach to Rhode Island producers to let us know if you haven't called us, or us you, please let us know what you need and how the drought has affected you. We have a request into our national office for drought assistance funding and we can only provide that to our eligible producers if we know who you are and how the drought and extreme heat has affected you. We can provide you with some preliminary information to help you understand if you are eligible for drought assistance. We will have deadlines to sign up participants in our Emergency Conservation Program, so don't wait, use the contact information at the end of this newsletter to give our County Office a call.



RI FSA in cooperation with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Land and Sea Together and the Eastern RI Conservation District will host an informational session on **October 18<sup>th</sup>** at the **Tiverton Library from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm** to help answer questions and have applications ready for signing up producers for assistance. Call the County Office for more details at 401-828-3120 option 1.

Please take time to read the articles below as you may find an opportunity for you to take part in!

"Stay safe"

Eric Scherer

RI State Executive Director, USDA, FSA

## 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](https://farmers.gov/working-with-us/stay-connected) or for subscription assistance contact the Rhode Island USDA Service Center at 401-828-3120 Option 1.

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## FSA Offers Drought Assistance for Livestock Producers Through Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP)

If you've suffered above normal expenses for hauling feed or water to livestock or hauling livestock to forage/grazing acres due to the impacts of drought, you may be eligible for financial assistance through the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP).

For eligible producers in qualifying counties, ELAP provides financial assistance for:

- the transportation of water to livestock;
- the above normal cost of mileage for transporting feed to livestock,
- the above normal cost of transporting livestock to forage/grazing acres.\*

*\*Hauling livestock one-way, one haul per animal reimbursement and no payment for "empty miles."*

Eligible livestock include cattle, buffalo, goats and sheep, among others, that are maintained for commercial use and located in a county where the qualifying drought conditions occur. A county must have had D2 severe drought intensity on the U.S. Drought Monitor for eight

consecutive weeks during the normal grazing period, or D3 or D4 drought intensity at any time during the normal grazing period. Producers must have risk in both eligible livestock and eligible grazing land in an eligible county to qualify for ELAP assistance.

### **WATER TRANSPORTATION**

For ELAP water transportation assistance, a producer must be transporting water to eligible livestock on eligible grazing land where the producer had adequate livestock watering systems or facilities in place before the drought occurred and where they do not normally require the transportation of water. Payments are for costs associated with personal labor, equipment, hired labor, equipment, and/or contracted water transportation fees. Cost of the water itself is not covered. The ELAP payment formula uses a national average price per gallon.

### **ABOVE NORMAL COSTS OF TRANSPORTING FEED**

ELAP provides financial assistance to livestock producers who incur above normal expenses for transporting feed to livestock during drought. The payment formula excludes the first 25 miles and any mileage over 1,000 miles. The reimbursement rate is 60% of the costs above what would normally have been incurred during the same time period in a normal (non-drought) year. **ABOVE NORMAL COSTS OF TRANSPORTING LIVESTOCK TO FORAGE/GRAZING ACRES**

ELAP provides financial assistance to livestock producers who are hauling livestock to a new location for feed resources due to insufficient feed and/or grazing in drought-impacted areas. Assistance for Livestock transportation is retroactive to 2021 and available for 2022 and subsequent years. **Please contact your county FSA office for additional details.**

For calendar year 2022 forward, producers must submit a notice of loss to your local FSA office **within 30 calendar days** of when the loss is apparent; producers should contact their county FSA office as soon as the loss of water resources or feed resources are known. For ELAP eligibility, documentation of expenses is critical. Producers should maintain records and receipts associated with the costs of transporting water to eligible livestock, the costs of transporting feed to eligible livestock, and the costs of transporting eligible livestock to forage/grazing acres.

ELAP also offers assistance to producers impacted by wildfire. Contact your county FSA office for more information on ELAP resources for wildfire losses. In addition, beekeepers also can benefit from ELAP provisions and should contact their county FSA office within 15 calendar days of when a loss occurs or from when the loss is apparent. For more information regarding ELAP, contact the Rhode Island USDA Service Center at 401-828-3120 Option 1 or visit [fsa.usda.gov/disaster](https://fsa.usda.gov/disaster).

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## **New Guide Available for Underserved Farmers, Ranchers**



A new multi-agency guide for USDA assistance for underserved farmers and ranchers is now available. If you are a farmer or rancher and are a minority, woman, veteran, beginning, or limited resource producer, you can use this booklet to learn about assistance and targeted opportunities available to you. This includes programs offered through the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Risk Management Agency. The guide is also available in Spanish, Hmong, Korean, Vietnamese, Thai and Chinese on [farmers.gov/translations](https://farmers.gov/translations).

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## USDA announces conservation funding opportunities for Rhode Island farmers and forestland owners



The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is announcing fiscal year 2023 assistance opportunities for agricultural producers and private landowners for federal conservation programs. While NRCS accepts applications for these programs year-round, producers and landowners should apply by the following state-specific ranking dates to be considered for this year's funding.

### Program ranking dates

- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) – **December 16, 2022**
- Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) – **December 16, 2022**
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) – **December 16, 2022**
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) – **December 16, 2022**
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Conservation Incentive Contracts (CIC) – **December 16, 2022**
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Oyster Reef Restoration – **December 16, 2022**
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Renewals FY 2024 – **March 17, 2023**

Through conservation programs, NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to help producers and landowners make conservation improvements on their land that benefit natural resources, build resiliency, and contribute to the nation's broader effort to combat the impacts of climate change.

"NRCS conservation programs are good for Rhode Island's natural resources and for your operation's bottom line," said Phou Vongkhamdy, NRCS State Conservationist in Rhode Island. "Whether this is your first time working with NRCS or you want to take conservation to

the next level on your land, we encourage you to contact your local NRCS field office to learn more.”

## Applying for assistance

Funding is provided through a competitive process. NRCS accepts applications for its conservation programs year-round. NRCS sets state-specific ranking dates to evaluate applications for funding. These dates account for producer needs, staff workload and ensure potential participants have ample opportunity to apply. Producers should apply by their state’s ranking dates to be considered for funding in the current cycle. Applications received after ranking dates will be automatically deferred to the next funding period.

## Program options

The **Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)** helps agricultural producers use conservation to manage risk and solve 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.

The **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)** helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resources concerns. Participants earn CSP payments for conservation performance—the higher the performance, the higher the payment.

The **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, increased soil health and reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, improved or created wildlife habitat, and mitigation against increasing weather volatility.

The **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)** provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands and their related benefits. There are two distinct paths for land protection under ACEP. There are:

- **Agricultural Land Easements (ALE)** to help private and tribal landowners, land trusts, and other entities such as state and local governments protect croplands and grasslands on working farms and ranches by limiting non-agricultural uses of the land through conservation easements
- **Wetlands Reserve Easements (WRE)** to help private and tribal landowners protect, restore, and enhance wetlands which have been previously degraded due to agricultural uses.

## Historically underserved producer benefits

Special provisions are also available for historically underserved producers. For EQIP, historically underserved producers are eligible for advance payments to help offset costs related to purchasing materials or contracting services up front. In addition, historically underserved producers can receive higher EQIP payment rates (up to 90 percent of average cost). NRCS sets aside EQIP and CSP for historically underserved producers.

## Conservation practices and climate

NRCS conservation programs play a critical role in USDA’s commitment to partnering with farmers, ranchers, forest landowners and local communities to deliver climate solutions that

strengthen agricultural operations and rural America. States may prioritize a variety of voluntary conservation practices through these NRCS programs, including those that support climate-smart agriculture and forestry (CSAF).

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 and to apply for NRCS programs**, contact your local conservation district or NRCS at:

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

Ghyllian Alger, NRCS District Conservationist 401-822-8835 [Ghyllian.alger@usda.gov](mailto:Ghyllian.alger@usda.gov)

**Northern RI Conservation District** *Serving Providence County* Conservation District Office: 401-934-0840

Cassius Spears, NRCS District Conservationist 401-822-8833 [Cassius.Spears@usda.gov](mailto:Cassius.Spears@usda.gov)

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

Jameson Long, NRCS District Conservationist 401-822-8847 [Jameson.Long@usda.gov](mailto:Jameson.Long@usda.gov)

**USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service** 60 Quaker Lane, Suite 46 Warwick, RI 02886 [www.ri.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ri.nrcs.usda.gov) [NRCSInfo@ri.usda.gov](mailto:NRCSInfo@ri.usda.gov)

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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## USDA Announces Assistance for On-Farm Food Safety Expenses for Specialty Crop Growers

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) plans to provide up to \$200 million in assistance for specialty crop producers who incur eligible on-farm food safety program expenses to obtain or renew a food safety certification in calendar years 2022 or 2023. USDA's new [Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops](#) (FSCSC) program will help to offset costs for specialty crop producers to comply with regulatory requirements and market-driven food safety certification requirements, which is part of USDA's broader effort to transform the food system to create a more level playing field for small and medium producers and a more balanced, equitable economy for everyone working in food and agriculture.

Click [here](#) to read news release.

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# Virtual Workshops Highlight Improvements to Whole-Farm Revenue Protection and Micro Farm

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is offering virtual workshops – on Oct. 11, Oct. 13, Nov. 15, and Dec. 13 – for agricultural producers and stakeholders to learn about the latest updates and improvements to the [Whole-Farm Revenue Protection](#) (WFRP) and the [Micro Farm](#) insurance options, two of the most comprehensive risk management options available. These insurance options are especially important to specialty crop, organic, urban, and direct market producers, and this is part of the USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) efforts to increase participation in these options and crop insurance overall.

RMA will host these workshops for agricultural producers via Microsoft Teams events:

- [Tuesday, Oct. 11 at 11 a.m. ET](#) ([click to join](#))
- [Thursday, Oct. 13 at 4 p.m. ET](#) ([click to join](#))
- Tuesday, Nov. 15 at 8 p.m. PT ([click to join](#))
- Tuesday, Dec. 13 at 11 a.m. ET ([click to join](#))

RSVP is not required. Attendees will have a chance to submit written questions during the event.

[Learn more.](#)



## 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 Office: 401-828-1300

Risk Management Agency: 919-875-4880

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