



# NEWSLETTER



January 2017

**Rhode Island Service Agency**

60 Quaker Lane Suite 62  
Warwick RI 02886

[www.fsa.usda.gov/ri](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ri)

**State Committee:**

Judith Carvalho,  
Anthony Donatelli Jr.  
Gilbert Rathbun Jr.  
*Meeting January 10th*

**State Executive**

**Director:**  
George Goulart Jr.

**Rhode Island County FSA Office:**  
401-828-3120 Option 2

**County Committee:**

Doreen Pezza  
Victor Hoogendoorn  
Vincent Confreda  
Joseph Silveira  
Kim Coulter

*Meeting January 4th*

**Acting County Executive**

**Director:**  
Ingrid Fratantuono

**Farm Loan Team:**  
401-828-3120 Option 3.

**Farm Loan Manager:**  
Roxanne S. Boisse

## USDA Climate Hub 'Energy Generation and Efficiency' Building Block

Through the Agricultural Act of 2014, USDA has several authorities that encourage the adoption of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies. The Energy Generation and Efficiency Building Block supports energy efficiency improvements in rural homes and on farm operations, for example, through EQIP's National On-Farm Energy Initiative. This Building Block also provides opportunities to reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions from energy generation and use, for example, through the Rural Energy for America Program. To learn more about energy generation and efficiency opportunities from USDA click the following link: [http://www.usda.gov/oce/climate\\_change/building\\_blocks/10\\_EnergyGenerationEfficiency.pdf](http://www.usda.gov/oce/climate_change/building_blocks/10_EnergyGenerationEfficiency.pdf)

For more information about the USDA Climate Hubs click here: <http://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/>.

## County Committee Election Results

County committee elections are over, the ballots are counted and the results are in...

LAA-2 Kent County, Vincent Confreda  
LAA-4 Newport County, Victor Hoogendoorn  
LAA-5 Bristol County, Joseph Silveira

Elected county committee members serve a three-year term and are responsible for making decisions on FSA disaster, conservation, commodity, and price support programs, as well as other important federal farm program issues.

County committee members are a valuable asset because they are comprised of local producers who participate in FSA programs themselves and have a direct connection to farmers and ranchers in the community. All recently elected county committee members and alternates took office on January 1, 2017, and joined the existing committee.

For more information about county committees and the election process, please contact your local FSA Office or visit [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

## USDA Makes it Easier to Transfer Land to the Next Generation of Farmers and Ranchers

### *Allows for Transfer of Certain Conservation Reserve Program Land to New Farmers; Provides Priority Enrollment in Working Lands Conservation Programs*

Beginning Jan. 9, 2017, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will offer an early termination opportunity for certain Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts, making it easier to transfer property to the next generation of farmers and ranchers, including family members. The land that is eligible for the early termination is among the least environmentally sensitive land enrolled in CRP.

This change to the CRP program is just one of many that USDA has implemented based on recommendations from the Land Tenure Advisory Subcommittee formed by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack in 2015.

Normally if a landowner terminates a CRP contract early, they are required to repay all previous payments plus interest. The new policy waives this repayment if the land is transferred to a beginning farmer or rancher through a sale or lease with an option to buy. With CRP enrollment close to the Congressionally-mandated cap of 24 million acres, the early termination will also allow USDA to enroll other land with higher conservation value elsewhere.

Acres terminated early from CRP under these land tenure provisions will be eligible for priority enrollment consideration into the CRP Grasslands, if eligible; or the Conservation Stewardship Program or Environmental Quality Incentives Program, as determined by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

According to the Tenure, Ownership and Transition of Agricultural Land survey, conducted by USDA in 2014, U.S. farmland owners expect to transfer 93 million acres to new ownership during 2015-2019. This represents 10 percent of all farmland across the nation. Details on the early termination opportunity will be available starting on Jan. 9, 2017, at local USDA service centers. For more information about CRP and to find out if your acreage is eligible for early contract termination, contact your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office or go online at [www.fsa.usda.gov/crp](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/crp). To locate your local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

## Organic Producers and Handlers May Apply for Certification Cost Share Reimbursements; Expanded Eligibility for Transition and State Certification Cost

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced that starting March 20, 2017, organic producers and handlers will be able to visit over 2,100 USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices to apply for federal reimbursement to assist with the cost of receiving and maintaining organic or transitional certification. USDA reimburses organic producers up to 75 percent of the cost of organic certification, but only about half of the nation's organic operations currently participate in the program. Starting March 20, USDA will provide a uniform, streamlined process for organic producers and handlers to apply for organic cost share assistance either by mail or in person.

USDA is making changes to increase participation in the National Organic Certification Cost Share Program (NOCCSP) and the Agricultural Management Assistance Organic Certification Cost Share Program, and at the same time provide more opportunities for organic producers to access other USDA programs, such as disaster protection and loans for farms, facilities and marketing. Producers can also access information on nonfederal agricultural resources, and get referrals to local experts, including organic agriculture, through USDA's Bridges to Opportunity service at the local FSA office.

Historically, many state departments of agriculture have obtained grants to disburse reimbursements to those producers and handlers qualifying for cost share assistance. FSA will continue to partner with states to administer the programs. For states that want to continue to directly administer the programs, applications will be due Feb. 17, 2017.

Eligible producers include any certified producers or handlers who have paid organic or transitional certification fees to a [USDA-accredited certifying](#) agent. Application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement/ arrangement requirements, travel/per diem for inspectors, user fees, sales assessments and postage are all eligible for a cost share reimbursement from USDA.

Once certified, producers and handlers are eligible to receive reimbursement for up to 75 percent of certification costs each year up to a maximum of \$750 per certification scope—crops, livestock, wild crops and handling. Today's announcement also adds transitional certification and state organic program fees as additional scopes.

To learn more about organic certification cost share, please visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/organic](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/organic) or contact a local FSA office by visiting <http://offices.usda.gov>.

## USDA Farm Service Agency Offers Text Alerts to Rhode Island Producers

### Subscribers Can Receive Important Program Reminders and Updates

Rhode Island USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) Acting County Executive Director Ingrid Fratantuono announced that farmers in Rhode Island now can receive notifications from their county office through text messages on their cell phone.

Whether producers are in the field, on a tractor or even on horseback, this service enables FSA customers and stakeholders to receive notifications while on the go. Producers will receive text messages regarding important program deadlines, reporting requirements, outreach events and updates.

Producers can text **RIKent** to **FSANOW** (372-669) to subscribe to text message alerts from Rhode Island. Standard text messaging rates apply. Contact your wireless carrier for details associated with your particular data plan. Participants may unsubscribe at any time.

Please contact your local FSA office at 401-828-3120 Option 2 if you have questions regarding FSA's email news service or the new text message option.

## Guaranteed Conservation Loans

Guaranteed Conservation Loans are available for applicants to install a conservation practice. These funds may be used for any conservation activities included in a conservation plan or Forest Stewardship Management plan. A copy of the conservation plan is required to complete the application. These loans are not limited to just family farmers. In some cases, applicants can operate non-eligible enterprises. Loan funds are issued by a participating commercial lender and guaranteed up to 80 percent by FSA or up to 90 percent for beginning and historically underserved producers.

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).