

June 2020



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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June FSA Newsletter

Rhode Island Farm Service Agency

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Warwick RI 02886

Phone: 401-828-3120 Option 1.

www.fsa.usda.gov/ri

State Executive Director: W. Michael Sullivan, PhD

State Committee: Doreen Pezza, David Frerich, Ellen Puccetti, Kevin Breene, Judith Carvalho

The State Committee meets the second Tuesday of every month subject to change.

RI County Office Suite 49

Phone: 401-828-3120 Option 2.

Message from the State Executive Director

It's a very different world, the orderly nature of our end of winter, spring preparations and on to another production year is disrupted and perhaps forever changed. I hope all of you and your families are well and doing the best possible to stay that way.

Pat Sullivan, our new Farm Loan Analyst is in the office daily and addressing the routine needs of RI producers. Pat will also be the lead for FSA borrowers who wish to push back debt obligations under the current situation by virtue of the new Disaster Set Aside declaration. This action can simply push current payments to the end of the current obligation and relieving the cash flow challenges of our time.

Our continued operation of the State and County Offices are guided by the combination of State and Federal guidelines on direct contact. Producers can call or email staff and arrangements can be made to achieve any necessary business. Please be assured we continue to get a considerable amount of work done while like the rest of you, doing so in new and sometimes creative ways. No walk-in appointments will be scheduled in the near future and I expect this to continue into June at the most optimistic moment. We have masks and are preparing to open as data and safety allows.

The Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) filing started May 26th. The sign-up period will continue until August 28, 2020. The focus of this bill is heavily weighted to commodities and much

County Executive Director: Sheryl Michener

County Committee: Joseph Polseno, Kim Coulter, George Goulart Jr., Gilbert Rathbun Jr, John Sousa

The County Committee meets the first Wednesday of every month subject to change.

Farm Loan Team:

Phone: 401-828-3120 Option 3.

Farm Loan Analyst: Patricia Sullivan

of what RI producers is treated under 'Specialty Crops' component of the program. Some important RI agriculture crops like oysters, are not within the USDA program but are assigned to RI DEM and programs through NOAA. Rules are still being written. Our oyster producers were some the most quickly impacted with the closures of restaurants and other wholesale chains. The animals still need tending so I think it safe to say there is stress and concern within this part of our RI farm community.

Greenhouse crops, nursery stock and vineyards might qualify for have some of their losses mitigated but additional efforts will be necessary and impacted producers will need to comment on the rule to see if their interests will be recognized. The website for comments is <https://beta.regulations.gov/document/FSA-2020-0004-0003> . We have offered to assist any RI producer with an interest in making a claim under this process with their effort.

Agritourism activities are not mentioned but there are many RI producers whose farms and operations greatly benefit with this value-added component. We hope to see it recognized in the final rules. Some of our vineyards and other venues serving the tourism, wedding and event components of agritourism are reporting losses into seven figures for cancelled events.

Most staff are teleworking and we endeavor to represent Rhode Island's producers with energy and efforts to their continued success and viability. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Farmers in Rhode Island Can Now Apply for Financial Assistance through USDA's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program

Agricultural producers can now apply for USDA's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), which provides direct payments to offset impacts from the coronavirus pandemic. The application and a payment calculator are now available online, and USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) staff members are available via phone, fax and online tools to help producers complete applications. The agency set up a call center in order to simplify how they serve new customers across the nation.

Applications will be accepted through August 28, 2020. Through CFAP, USDA is making available \$16 billion for vital financial assistance to producers of agricultural commodities who have suffered a five-percent-or-greater price decline due to COVID-19 and face additional significant marketing costs as a result of lower demand, surplus production, and disruptions to shipping patterns and the orderly marketing of commodities.

We also want to remind producers that the program is structured to ensure the availability of funding for all eligible producers who apply.

In order to do this, producers will receive 80 percent of their maximum total payment upon approval of the application. The remaining portion of the payment, not to exceed the payment limit, will be paid at a later date nationwide, as funds remain available.

Producers can download the CFAP application and other eligibility forms from farmers.gov/cfap. Also, on that webpage, producers can find a payment calculator to help identify sales and inventory records needed to apply and calculate potential payments.

Additionally, producers in search of one-on-one support with the CFAP application process can call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance. This is a good first step before a producer engages the team at the FSA county office at their local USDA Service Center.

Applying for Assistance

Producers of all eligible commodities will apply through their local FSA office. Those who use the online calculator tool will be able to print off a pre-filled CFAP application, sign, and submit to your local FSA office either electronically or via hand delivery. Please contact your local office to determine the preferred method. Find contact information for your local office at farmers.gov/cfap.

Documentation to support the producer's application and certification may be requested after the application is filed. FSA has streamlined the signup process to not require an acreage report at the time of application and a USDA farm number may not be immediately needed.

Additional Commodities

USDA is also establishing a process for the public to identify additional commodities for potential inclusion in CFAP. Specifically, USDA is looking for data on agricultural commodities, that are not currently eligible for CFAP, that the public believes to have either:

1. suffered a five percent-or-greater price decline between mid-January and mid-April as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic,
2. shipped but subsequently spoiled due to loss of marketing channel, or
3. not left the farm or remained unharvested as mature crops.

More information about this process is available on farmers.gov/cfap.

More Information

To find the latest information on CFAP, visit farmers.gov/cfap or call 877-508-8364.

USDA Service Centers are open for business by phone appointment only, and field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. While program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with producers by phone and using online tools whenever possible. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, or any other Service Center agency are required to call their Service Center to schedule a phone appointment. More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

FSA Implements Set-Aside Loan Provision for Customers Impacted by COVID-19

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will broaden the use of the Disaster Set-Aside (DSA) loan provision, normally used in the wake of natural disasters, to allow farmers with USDA farm loans who are affected by COVID-19, and are determined eligible, to have their next payment set aside. In some cases, FSA may also set aside a second payment for farmers who have already had one payment set aside because of a prior designated disaster.

FSA direct loan borrowers will receive a letter with the details of the expanded Disaster Set-Aside authorities, which includes the possible set-aside of annual operating loans, as well as explanations of the additional loan servicing options that are available. To discuss or request a loan payment Set-Aside, borrowers should call or email the farm loan staff at their local FSA county office.

The set-aside payment's due date is moved to the final maturity date of the loan or extended up to twelve months in the case of an annual operating loan. Any principal set-aside will continue to accrue interest until it is repaid. This aims to improve the borrower's cashflow in the current production cycle.

FSA previously announced it was relaxing the loan-making process and adding flexibilities for servicing direct and guaranteed loans to provide credit to producers in need. Direct loan applicants and borrowers are encouraged to contact their local FSA county office to discuss loan making and servicing flexibilities and other needs or concerns. Customers participating in FSA's guaranteed loan programs are encouraged to contact their lender. Information on these flexibilities, and office contact information, can be found on farmers.gov/coronavirus.

FSA will be accepting most forms and applications by facsimile or electronic signature. Some services are also available online to customers with an eAuth account, which provides access to the farmers.gov portal where producers can view USDA farm loan information and certain program applications and payments. Customers can track payments, report completed practices, request

conservation assistance and electronically sign documents. Customers who do not already have an eAuth account can enroll at farmers.gov/sign-in.

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USDA Reminds Producers to Complete Crop Acreage Reports

The Rhode Island County office for USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is currently open to phone and virtual appointments only but can still work with producers on timely filing crop acreage reports. FSA staff can provide assistance over the phone, by email and through virtual meetings via Microsoft Teams.

The following acreage reporting dates are applicable for Rhode Island:

- **July 15, 2020**, Annual, Grass, Mixed Forage, Alfalfa, Fruit and Nut Trees and Perennial Crops and Perennial Forage (except Apples, Cranberries and Peaches)
- **September 30, 2020**, Value Loss Crops such as Aquaculture, Floriculture, Turfgrass sod, Christmas Trees
- **January 2, 2020**, Honey (beehive colonies) and Maple Sap
- **January 15, 2020**, Apples Cranberries and Peaches

In order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements, all producers must file an accurate crop acreage report by the applicable deadline. FSA staff is still able to assist producers in completing acreage reports, including providing maps.

The Rhode Island County FSA office is using Microsoft Teams software to virtually meet with producers to review maps and documents for certification. Producers who want to schedule a virtual appointment can download the Microsoft Teams app on their smart phones and call the FSA office for an appointment. You can also use Microsoft Teams from your personal computer without downloading software.

After completed maps and all acreage reporting information is received, FSA will make software updates and [mail, email] producers the completed *Report of Acreage* form (FSA-578) to sign. Producers must return the signed form certifying their acreage report to the FSA office through [mail, email] by July 15th.

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.

Producers should also report crop acreage they intended to plant, but due to natural disaster, were unable to plant. 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. Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP-covered crops is the earlier of the dates listed above or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

If you have applied for organic certification and do not receive it before the acreage reporting deadline, you may provide the necessary documentation to FSA immediately upon receipt from the certifying agent.

For questions, please contact FSA's Rhode Island County office at 401-828-3120 Option 2

Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybee, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)

The Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) provides emergency assistance to eligible livestock, honeybee, and farm-raised fish producers who have losses due to disease, adverse weather or other conditions, such as blizzards and wildfires, not covered by other agricultural disaster assistance programs.

Eligible livestock losses include grazing losses not covered under the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP), loss of purchased feed and/or mechanically harvested feed due to an eligible adverse weather event, additional cost of transporting water because of an eligible drought and additional cost associated with gathering livestock to treat for cattle tick fever.

Eligible honeybee losses include loss of purchased feed due to an eligible adverse weather event, cost of additional feed purchased above normal quantities due to an eligible adverse weather condition, colony losses in excess of normal mortality due to an eligible weather event or loss condition, including CCD, and hive losses due to eligible adverse weather. For honeybee losses, producers must notify FSA within 15 calendar days of when a loss occurs or from when the loss is apparent.

Eligible farm-raised fish losses include death losses in excess of normal mortality and/or loss of purchased feed due to an eligible adverse weather event.

Producers who suffer eligible livestock, honeybee, or farm-raised fish losses during calendar year 2020, must file:

- A notice of loss within 30 calendar days after the loss is apparent (15 days for honeybee losses)
- An application for payment by Feb. 1, 2021

The following ELAP Fact Sheets (by topic) are available online:

- [ELAP for Farm-Raised Fish Fact Sheet](#)

- [ELAP for Livestock Fact Sheet](#)
- [ELAP for Honeybees Fact Sheet](#)

To view these and other FSA program fact sheets, visit the FSA fact sheet web page at www.fsa.usda.gov/factsheets.

Livestock Inventory Records

Producers are reminded to keep updated livestock inventory records. These records are necessary in the event of a natural disaster.

When disasters strike, the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) can assist producers who suffered excessive livestock death losses and grazing or feed losses due to eligible natural disasters.

To participate in livestock disaster assistance programs, producers will be required to provide verifiable documentation of death losses resulting from an eligible adverse weather event and must submit a notice of loss to their local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is apparent. For grazing or feed losses, producers must submit a notice of loss to their local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent and should maintain documentation and receipts.

Producers should record all pertinent information regarding livestock inventory records including:

- [Documentation of the number, kind, type, and weight range of livestock](#)
- [Beginning inventory supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts;](#)

For more information on documentation requirements, contact your local FSA office.

Tree Assistance Program (TAP) Sign-up

Orchardists and nursery tree growers who experienced losses from natural disasters during calendar year 2020 must submit a TAP application either 90 calendar days after the disaster event or the date when the loss is apparent.

TAP provides financial assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines damaged by natural disasters.

Eligible tree types include trees, bushes or vines that produce an annual crop for commercial purposes. Nursery trees include ornamental, fruit, nut and Christmas trees that are produced for commercial sale. Trees used for pulp or timber are ineligible.

To qualify for TAP, orchardists must suffer a qualifying tree, bush or vine loss in excess of 15 percent mortality from an eligible natural disaster, plus an adjustment for normal mortality. The eligible trees, bushes or vines must have been owned when the natural disaster occurred; however, eligible growers are not required to own the land on which the eligible trees, bushes and vines were planted.

If the TAP application is approved, the eligible trees, bushes and vines must be replaced within 12 months from the date the application is approved. The cumulative total quantity of acres planted to

trees, bushes or vines, for which a producer can receive TAP payments, cannot exceed 1,000 acres annually.

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).