

August 2020



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

# NEWSLETTER

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## Rhode Island FSA Newsletter

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**Rhode Island  
Farm Service  
Agency**

**Rhode Island State  
Office:** 60 Quaker  
Lane Suite 62  
Warwick, RI 02886

**Phone:** 401-828-  
3120 Option 1.

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

**State Executive  
Director:** W. Michael  
Sullivan, PhD.

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

The State Committee  
meets the second  
Tuesday of every

### Message from the State Executive Director

The FSA family is working hard to implement and 'fit' Rhode Island into the USDA programs. We join you with our masks, hand sanitizer and optimism that we will all get through this time.

The Coronavirus Food Production Act has provided some assistance to dairies, beef, hay and corn producers in RI. The request for inclusion of turfgrass sod, wineries and agritourism has not been accepted as far as we know. The oyster farmers are waiting for modest assistance on COVID impacts that is being administered through the State and DEM. Our request to provide some COVID or other emergency funds to assist pork producers who rely on food scraps and waste for a significant part of their animal's diet and now have had to purchase costly replacement feed has been declined.

Traditional work activities on the farm and USDA agencies continue. The County Office staff have finished with all acreage reporting efforts except for a few folks. If you are one of the late ones, please call the County Office quickly.

The deadlines for other commodity programs such as NAP insurance for nursery operators and other 'value loss' crops are rapidly approaching. If you are not familiar with the program, please call or check our website ([https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdafiles/FactSheets/noninsured\\_crop\\_disaster\\_assistance\\_program-nap-fact\\_sheet.pdf](https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdafiles/FactSheets/noninsured_crop_disaster_assistance_program-nap-fact_sheet.pdf)).

month subject to change.

**Rhode Island  
County Office Suite  
49**

**Phone:** 401-828-3120 Option 2.

**County Executive  
Director:** Sheryl Michener

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

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

**Farm Loan Team  
Suite 49**

**Phone:** 401-828-3120 Option 3.

**Farm Loan Analyst:**  
Patricia Sullivan

If you have questions call me or the County Office staff. We are committed to helping you understand how all producers might benefit

FSA continues to have record low loan rates to assist producers with farm ownership, operations and farm storage systems where a building and associated equipment for handling and even trucking might be eligible. If you have a potential project reach out to Pat Sullivan our new Farm Loan Analyst for information. Her direct line is 401-822-3120 Option 3 and the most up to date info is at our website <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/index>

The face of Rhode Island agriculture is constantly changing. New farmers and new approaches will keep emerging. This week we lost one of the 'face's' I always enjoyed and learned from. Rodney Bailey of East Greenwich passed away and our thoughts and prayers go to his family.

We are here to serve and assist. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out and ask. Our FSA staff will be ready and willing to assist. You and your families remain in our minds and thoughts as we travel through these times.

*W. Michael Sullivan, PhD.*

*RI State Executive Director*

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## **USDA Launches New Farmers.gov Features to Help Farmers Hire Workers**

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced new features on the [farmers.gov](https://www.farmers.gov) website designed to help facilitate the employment of H-2A workers.

USDA's goal is to help farmers navigate the complex H-2A program that is administered by Department of Labor, Department of Homeland Security, and the State Department so hiring a farm worker is an easier process.

The primary new H-2A features on Farmers.gov include:

- A real-time dashboard that enables farmers to track the status of their eligible employer application and visa applications for temporary nonimmigrant workers;
- Streamlining the login information so if a farmer has an existing login.gov account they can save multiple applications tracking numbers for quick look-up at any time;
- Enables easy access to the Department of Labor's (DOL) Foreign Labor Application Gateway (FLAG);
- Allows farmers to track time-sensitive actions taken in the course of Office of Foreign Labor Certification's (OFLC) adjudication of temporary labor certification applications;

- Allowing for farmers to access all application forms on-line.

All information can be found at [www.farmers.gov/manage/h2a](http://www.farmers.gov/manage/h2a).

In 2018, [Secretary Perdue unveiled farmers.gov](#), a dynamic, mobile-friendly public website combined with an authenticated portal where customers can apply for programs, process transactions and manage accounts. With feedback from customers and field employees who serve those customers, [farmers.gov](#) delivers farmer-focused features through an agile, iterative process to deliver the greatest immediate value to America's agricultural producers – helping farmers and ranchers do right, and feed everyone.

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## USDA Investigates Packages of Unsolicited Seeds from China

USDA is aware that people across the country have received suspicious, unsolicited packages of seed that appear to be coming from China. USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is working closely with the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection, other federal agencies, and State departments of agriculture to investigate the situation.

USDA urges anyone who receives an unsolicited package of seeds to immediately contact their [State plant regulatory official](#) or [APHIS State plant health director](#). Please hold onto the seeds and packaging, including the mailing label, until someone from your State department of agriculture or APHIS contacts you with further instructions. Do not plant seeds from unknown origins.

At this time, we don't have any evidence indicating this is something other than a "brushing scam" where people receive unsolicited items from a seller who then posts false customer reviews to boost sales. USDA is currently collecting seed packages from recipients and will test their contents and determine if they contain anything that could be of concern to U.S. agriculture or the environment.

USDA is committed to preventing the unlawful entry of prohibited seeds and protecting U.S. agriculture from invasive pests and noxious weeds. Visit the [APHIS' website](#) to learn more about USDA's efforts to stop agricultural smuggling and promote trade compliance.

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## One-Time PLC Yield Updates – Deadline September 30

Farm owners have a one-time opportunity to update PLC yields of covered commodities on the farm, regardless of Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program election. The deadline to request a PLC yield update is September 30, 2020.

The updated yield will be equal to 90 percent of the average yield per planted acre in crop years 2013-2017 (excluding any year where the applicable covered commodity was not planted), subject to the ratio obtained by dividing the 2008-2012 average national yield by the 2013-2017 average national yield for the covered commodity. If the reported yield in any year is less than 75 percent of the 2013-2017 average county yield, then the yield will be substituted with 75 percent of the county average yield.

The chart below provides the ratio obtained by dividing the 2008-2012 average national yield by the 2013-2017 average national yield for each covered commodity.

**Covered Commodity National Yield Factor**

Barley	0.9437
Canola	0.9643
Chickpeas, Large	1.0000
Chickpeas, Small	0.9760
Corn	0.9000
Crambe	1.0000
Flaxseed	1.0000
Grain Sorghum	0.9077
Lentils	1.0000
Mustard Seed	0.9460
Oats	0.9524
Peanuts	0.9273
Peas, Dry	0.9988
Rapeseed	1.0000
Rice, Long	0.9330
Rice, Medium	0.9887
Rice, Temp Japonica	0.9591
Safflower	1.0000
Seed Cotton	0.9000
Sesame Seed	0.9673
Soybeans	0.9000
Sunflower Seed	0.9396
Wheat	0.9545

It is the owner's choice whether to update or keep existing PLC yields. If a yield update is not made, then no action is required to maintain the existing PLC yield. An existing or updated PLC yield will be maintained and effective for crop years 2020 through 2023 (life of the 2018 Farm Bill).

PLC yields may be updated on a covered commodity-by-covered commodity basis using FSA form [CCC-867](#).

For more information, reference resources and decision tools, visit [farmers.gov/arc-plc](https://farmers.gov/arc-plc). Contact your local Farm Service Agency Office for assistance – [farmers.gov/service-center-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-center-locator).

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## Additional Commodities Eligible for Coronavirus Food Assistance Program

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced an initial list of additional commodities that have been added to the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), and that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) made other adjustments to the program based on comments received from agricultural producers and organizations and review of market data. Producers will be able to submit applications that include these commodities on Monday, July 13, 2020. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is accepting through Aug. 28, 2020, applications for CFAP, which helps offset price declines and additional marketing costs because of the coronavirus pandemic. USDA expects additional eligible commodities to be announced in the coming weeks.

USDA collected comments and supporting data for consideration of additional commodities through June 22, 2020.

### **Changes to CFAP include:**

- Adding the following commodities: alfalfa sprouts, anise, arugula, basil, bean sprouts, beets, blackberries, Brussels sprouts, celeriac (celery root), chives, cilantro, coconuts, collard greens, dandelion greens, greens (others not listed separately), guava, kale greens, lettuce – including Boston, green leaf, Lolla Rossa, oak leaf green, oak leaf red and red leaf – marjoram, mint, mustard, okra, oregano, parsnips, passion fruit, peas (green), pineapple, pistachios, radicchio, rosemary, sage, savory, sorrel, fresh sugarcane, Swiss chard, thyme and turnip top greens.
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- Expanding for seven currently eligible commodities – apples, blueberries, garlic, potatoes, raspberries, tangerines and taro – CARES Act funding for sales losses because USDA found these commodities had a 5 percent or greater price decline between mid-January and mid-April as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Originally, these commodities were only eligible for marketing adjustments.
- Determining that peaches and rhubarb no longer qualify for payment under the CARES Act sales loss category.
- Correcting payment rates for apples, artichokes, asparagus, blueberries, cantaloupes, cucumbers, garlic, kiwifruit, mushrooms, papaya, peaches, potatoes, raspberries, rhubarb, tangerines and taro.

Additional details can be found in the Federal Register in the [Notice of Funding Availability \(NOFA\)](#) and [Final Rule Correction](#) and at [www.farmers.gov/cfap](https://www.farmers.gov/cfap).

Producers have several options for applying to the CFAP program:

1. Using an online portal, accessible at [farmers.gov/cfap](https://farmers.gov/cfap), allows producers with secure USDA login credentials—known as eAuthentication—to certify eligible commodities online, digitally sign applications and submit directly to the local USDA Service Center. New commodities will be available in the system on July 13, 2020.
2. Completing the application form using our CFAP Application Generator and Payment Calculator found at [farmers.gov/cfap](https://farmers.gov/cfap). This Excel workbook allows customers to input information specific to their operation to determine estimated payments and populate the application form, which can be printed, then signed and submitted to their local USDA Service Center. An updated version with the new commodities will be available on the website on July 13, 2020.
3. Downloading the AD-3114 application form from [farmers.gov/cfap](https://farmers.gov/cfap) and manually completing the form to submit to the local USDA Service Center by mail, electronically or by hand delivery to an office drop box. In some limited cases, the office may be open for in-person business by appointment. Visit [farmers.gov/coronavirus/service-center-status](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus/service-center-status) to check the status of your local office.

USDA Service Centers can also work with producers to complete and securely transmit digitally signed applications through two commercially available tools: Box and OneSpan. Producers who are interested in digitally signing their applications should notify their local service centers when calling to discuss the CFAP application process. You can learn more about these solutions at [farmers.gov/mydocs](https://farmers.gov/mydocs).

### **Getting Help from FSA**

New customers seeking one-on-one support with the CFAP application process can call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer general assistance. This is a recommended first step before a producer engages the team at the FSA county office at their local USDA Service Center.

All other eligibility forms, such as those related to adjusted gross income and payment information, can be downloaded from [farmers.gov/cfap](https://farmers.gov/cfap). For existing FSA customers, these documents are likely already on file.

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## **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](https://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](https://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](https://farmers.gov/sign-in).

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](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus).

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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).

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