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Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Rhode Island FSA Newsletter

Rhode Island Farm Service Agency

Rhode Island State Office

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Warwick, RI 02886

Phone: 401-3120 Option 1.

www.fsa.usda.gov/ri

State Executive Director: W. Michael Sullivan, PhD

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

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

Rhode Island County Office Suite 49:

Message from the State Executive Director

The strange and challenging times continue into a new year. Rainfall patterns have restored most farm ponds to functional depth but ground water levels are still below expectations for this time of year. We can hope the forecast is correct with expectations of elevated precipitation over the next few months and the full restoration of this needed farm asset for the 2021 crop year.

Our FSA staff continue their work responsibilities and getting payments out from our current crisis programs. The **Coronavirus Food Assistance Program** (CFAP2) generated strong interest and is proving to be valuable to most Rhode Island producers. The County Office received almost 200 applications and has already reviewed 75% of claims and paid out approximately \$3.1M to eligible producers. By the time you receive this note I'd expect the staff to have completed most of the outstanding claims and our financial support to RI producers to exceed \$5M. We have appealed for the inclusion of turfgrass sod producers into the program and are awaiting a decision from DC on this.

The County Office Staff and I chased a fair number of folks down to get their applications completed before the deadline. We were unable to enroll several folks who cited an array of concerns such as 'don't want to give you guys any more information about me than necessary' or 'we won't take handouts'. The information requested was quite limited given the magnitude of the payout and most of the information was already in the Government's hands via IRS and

Phone: 401-828-3120 Option 2.

County Executive Director:
Sheryl Michener

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

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

Farm Loan Team Suite 49:

Phone: 401-828-3120 Option 3.

Matthew Richter, District Director

Patricia Sullivan, Farm Loan Analyst

other reports. This was the first time in my career where we (the Government) provided this degree of assistance to the necessary and essential agricultural and fisheries communities with the efficiency and speed we were able. I'm proud of the FSA staff who helped these RI producers and fish harvesters.

FSA has the **Emergency Livestock Assistance Program** still open. As a result of the 2020 drought you can get assistance with animal water supply challenges and even address honeybee losses, as well as Grazing losses. The Secretary has acknowledged the extreme wind events that were recently experienced in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Please help us to assist you and call in if you have a need and we'll do our best to assist.

The **Seafood Tariff** program was extended until January 15, 2021. We have distributed almost **\$5M** of assistance to our RI fleet. We hope to finish strong with those who have not yet applied.

Late last week Secretary Purdue announced another round of investment in **Food Boxes** to feed less fortunate members of our community. This program is an extension of the Secretary's mantra to 'do what's right and feed all'. A fair number of us were disappointed that the program did not use a RI based food distributor for the 3rd phase of this effort. The same vendors eligible for last phase are the only ones eligible for the 4th round. **A significant change is noted in that now RI landed, and processed fish and seafood products can be included in this distribution effort.** Previous rounds only included land grown protein.

Rhode Island has an opportunity to improve our representation for programs and future offerings of USDA. On January 6th, the Department announced it's intention of establishing a new advisory committee on **urban agriculture**, part of a broader effort to focus on the needs of urban farmers. The 12-person committee will advise the Secretary of Agriculture on the development of policies and outreach relating to urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural production practices as well as identify any barriers to urban agriculture. While we have many rural areas in RI our USDA programs don't always reflect the needs of farmers, producers and harvesters in State's like Rhode Island.

USDA is seeking nominations for individuals representing a broad spectrum of expertise, including:

- Four agricultural producers (two agricultural producers in an urban area or urban cluster and two agricultural producers who use innovative technology).
- Two representatives from an institution of higher education or extension program.

- One representative of a nonprofit organization, which may include a public health, environmental or community organization.
- One representative of business and economic development, which may include a business development entity, a chamber of commerce, a city government or a planning organization.
- One individual with supply chain experience, which may include a food aggregator, wholesale food distributor, food hub or an individual who has direct-to-consumer market experience.
- One individual from a financing entity.
- Two individuals with related experience or expertise in urban, indoor and other emerging agriculture production practices, as determined by the Secretary.

Any interested person or organization may nominate qualified individuals for membership. Self-nominations are also welcome. **I'd very much like to see Rhode Island represented in this great effort.**

The staff here at USDA Farm Services Agency is going to be here to assist however we can in these challenging times. Agriculture in Rhode Island is a small community and we can and should pull together to survive and thrive even in difficult times.

Stay well friends,

W. Michael Sullivan, PhD

Rhode Island Farm Service Agency Announces County Committee Elections Results

Rhode Island U.S Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that County Committee elections are over and the ballots have been counted.

Kim Coulter of Charlestown was elected to represent local administrative area (LAA) # 3 Washington County.

Alan Kinsley of West Kingstown RI will serve as the first alternate.

County committee members are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA. They help deliver programs at the county level and work to serve the needs of local producers. All recently

elected county committee members will take office in January 2021 and will be joining the existing committee. Every FSA office is required to have a county committee, which are made up of local farmers, ranchers and foresters elected by local producers.

County committee members impact the administration of FSA within a community by applying their knowledge and judgment to help FSA make important decisions on commodity support programs, conservation programs, indemnity and disaster programs, emergency programs and eligibility.

County committee members serve local producers through their decision making and help shape the culture of a local FSA office. They also ensure the fair and equitable administration of FSA farm programs in their counties and are accountable to the Secretary of Agriculture. Members conduct hearings and reviews as requested by the state committee, ensure underserved farmers, ranchers and foresters are fairly represented, make recommendations to the state committee on existing programs, monitor changes in farm programs and inform farmers of the purpose and provisions of FSA programs. They also assist with outreach and inform underserved producers, such as beginning farmers, ranchers and foresters, about FSA opportunities.

For more information, visit the FSA website at fsa.usda.gov/elections or contact the Rhode Island County FSA office at 401-828-3120 Option 2.

Enrollment Begins for Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs for 2021

Agricultural producers can now make elections and enroll in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for the 2021 crop year. The signup period opened Tuesday, Oct. 13. These key U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) safety-net programs help producers weather fluctuations in either revenue or price for certain crops, and more than \$5 billion in payments are in the process of going out to producers who signed up for the 2019 crop year.

Enrollment for the 2021 crop year closes March 15, 2021.

ARC provides income support payments on historical base acres when actual crop revenue declines below a specified guaranteed level. PLC provides income support payments on historical base acres when the effective price for a covered commodity falls below its reference price.

Covered commodities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium and short grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

2021 Elections and Enrollment

Producers can elect coverage and enroll in crop-by-crop ARC-County or PLC, or ARC-Individual for the entire farm, for the 2021 crop year. Although election changes for 2021 are optional, enrollment (signed contract) is required for each year of the program. If a producer has a multi-year contract on the farm and makes an election change for 2021, it will be necessary to sign a new contract.

If an election is not submitted by the deadline of March 15, 2021, the election defaults to the current election for crops on the farm from the prior crop year.

For crop years 2022 and 2023, producers will have an opportunity to make new elections during those signups. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the farm.

2019 Crop Year ARC and PLC Payments

FSA began processing payments last week for 2019 ARC-County (ARC-CO) and PLC on covered commodities that met payment triggers on farms enrolled for the 2019 crop year. In addition to the \$5 billion now in process, FSA anticipates it will issue additional payments by the end of November for 2019 commodities covered under ARC-Individual (ARC-IC) and additional commodities that trigger PLC and ARC-CO payments for which rates have not yet been published

Producers who had 2019 covered commodities enrolled in ARC-CO can visit the [ARC and PLC webpage](#) for payment rates applicable to their county and each covered commodity. For farms and covered commodities enrolled in 2019 PLC, the following crops met payment triggers: barley, canola, chickpeas (small and large), corn, dry peas, grain sorghum, lentils, long and medium grain rice, peanuts, seed cotton and wheat.

Oats and soybeans did not meet 2019 PLC payment triggers.

2019 PLC payment rates for the following covered commodities have not been determined: crambe, flaxseed, mustard seed, rapeseed, safflower, sesame seed, sunflower seed and temperate Japonica rice. Payment rates for these commodities will be announced at a later date.

Web-Based Decision Tools

In partnership with USDA, the University of Illinois and Texas A&M University offer web-based decision tools to assist producers in making informed, educated decisions using crop data specific to their respective farming operations. Tools include:

- [Gardner-farmdoc Payment Calculator](#), the University of Illinois tool that offers farmers the ability to run payment estimate modeling for their farms and counties for ARC-County and PLC.
- [ARC and PLC Decision Tool](#), the Texas A&M tool allows producers to analyze payment yield updates and expected payments for 2021. Producers who have used the tool in the past should see their username and much of their farm data already available in the system.

More Information

For more information on ARC and PLC, including two online decision tools that assist producers in making enrollment and election decisions specific to their operations, visit the [ARC and PLC webpage](#).

For additional questions and assistance, contact your local USDA service center. To locate your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-locator.

Noninsured Crop Coverage Helps Producers Manage Risks

The Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) helps you manage risk through coverage for both crop losses and crop planting that was prevented due to natural disasters. The eligible or "noninsured" crops include agricultural commodities not covered by federal crop insurance.

You must be enrolled in the program and have purchased coverage for the eligible crop in the crop year in which the loss incurred to receive program benefits following a qualifying natural disaster.

NAP Buy-Up Coverage Option

NAP offers higher levels of coverage, from 50 to 65 percent of expected production in 5 percent increments, at 100 percent of the average market price. Buy-up levels of NAP coverage are available if the producer can show at least one year of previously successfully growing the crop for which coverage is being requested.

Producers of organics and crops marketed directly to consumers also may exercise the "buy-up" option to obtain NAP coverage of 100 percent of the average market price at the coverage levels of between 50 and 65 percent of expected production.

NAP basic coverage is available at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production.

Buy-up coverage is not available for crops intended for grazing.

NAP Service Fees

For all coverage levels, the NAP service fee is the lesser of \$325 per crop or \$825 per producer per county, not to exceed a total of \$1,950 for a producer with farming interests in multiple counties.

NAP Enhancements for Qualified Military Veterans

Qualified veteran farmers or ranchers are eligible for a service fee waiver and premium reduction, if the NAP applicant meets certain eligibility criteria.

Beginning, limited resource and targeted underserved farmers or ranchers remain eligible for a waiver of NAP service fees and premium reduction when they file form CCC-860, "*Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource and Beginning Farmer or Rancher Certification*."

For NAP application, eligibility and related program information, contact your Rhode Island County USDA Service Center at 401-828-3120 Option 2 or visit fsa.usda.gov/nap.

Keeping Livestock Inventory Records

Livestock inventory records are necessary in the event of a natural disaster, so remember to keep them updated.

When disasters strike, the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) can help you if you've suffered excessive livestock death losses and grazing or feed losses due to eligible natural disasters.

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

You 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 Rhode Island County USDA Service Center at 401-828-3120 Option 2 or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Submit Loan Requests for Financing Early

The Farm Loan team in Rhode Island is already working on operating loans for spring 2021 and asks potential borrowers to submit their requests early so they can be timely processed. The farm loan team can help determine which loan programs are best for applicants.

FSA offers a wide range of low-interest loans that can meet the financial needs of any farm operation for just about any purpose. The traditional **farm operating and farm ownership loans** can help large and small farm operations take advantage of early purchasing discounts for spring inputs as well expenses throughout the year.

Microloans are a simplified loan program that will provide up to \$50,000 for both Farm Ownership and Operating Microloans to eligible applicants. These loans, targeted for smaller and non-traditional operations, can be used for operating expenses, starting a new operation, purchasing equipment, and other needs associated with a farming operation. Loans to beginning farmers and members of underserved groups are a priority.

Other types of loans available include:

Marketing Assistance Loans allow producers to use eligible commodities as loan collateral and obtain a 9-month loan while the crop is in storage. These loans provide cash flow to the producer and allow them to market the crop when prices may be more advantageous.

Farm Storage Facility Loans can be used to build permanent structures used to store eligible commodities, for storage and handling trucks, or portable or permanent handling equipment. A variety of structures are eligible under this loan, including bunker silos, grain bins, hay storage structures, and refrigerated structures for vegetables and fruit. A producer may borrow up to \$500,000 per loan.

For more eligibility requirements and information about FSA Loan programs, contact the Rhode Island Farm Loan Team at 401-828-3120 Option 3.

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).