

February 2014

USDA e-News

California Edition



United States Department of Agriculture

Welcome to USDA e-News, California Edition, a multi-agency newsletter providing California's producers and other interested parties with current information.

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Featured Item

Food, Farm and Jobs Bill

The [Agricultural Act of 2014](#) is important legislation that provides authorization for services and programs that impact every American and millions of people around the world. The new Farm Bill builds on historic economic gains in rural America over the past five years, while achieving meaningful reform and billions of dollars in savings for the taxpayer. For more information, please see: <http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=farmbill>.

Drought Resources

With California in its worst drought in the state's 160 years of record-keeping, USDA is working with federal and state partners to provide a collaborative response. For the most complete and up-to-date information on available resources, please visit the USDA Drought Resource webpage at <http://www.usda.gov/drought> and the California Department of Food and Agriculture Drought Resource webpage at <http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/drought>.

USDA Announces Additional Assistance for Drought-Stricken California

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack joined President Barack Obama in Fresno on February 14 to announce additional assistance to farmers, ranchers and residents affected by California's drought. Assistance includes:

- \$100 million in livestock disaster assistance for California producers.

- \$5 million in targeted conservation assistance for the most extreme and exceptional drought areas through Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).
- \$5 million in targeted Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program assistance to the most drought impacted areas of California to protect vulnerable soils.
- \$3 million in Emergency Community Water Assistance Grants (ECWAG) for rural communities experiencing water shortages.

For complete details on this announcement, read the press release:

<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentidonly=true&contentid=2014/02/0022.xml>.

Cdfa and USDA Host Drought Resource Sessions in Coming Weeks

California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and USDA will be holding informational sessions on drought resources for farmers, ranchers and farmworkers in several locations throughout the state **February 18, 19, 20, 25 and 26**. These sessions will provide information on a variety of state and federal government programs designed to assist farmers with water conservation, crop insurance, and other on-farm management tools. Information on farmworker assistance programs will also be available. More information is available here: http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/egov/Press_Releases/Press_Release.asp?PRnum=14-007

Emergency Conservation Program Available in 50 Counties for Drought

Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) is available in 50 California counties as a result of the ongoing drought in the state. **Applications for ECP are being accepted through March 27, 2014.** ECP provides emergency funding and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate farmland and rangeland damaged by natural disasters. Participants may receive cost-share assistance of up to 75% of the cost to implement approved emergency conservation practices. Producers must submit their requests for ECP assistance to FSA prior to beginning construction work. For more information, please see the [ECP Press Release](#) or visit your local [FSA office](#).

Environmental Quality Incentives Program Provides Drought Assistance

USDA announced a total of \$25 million is being provided through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program ([EQIP](#)) to help agricultural operators use water more efficiently, stabilize fallowed cropland, and protect their livelihoods for the future. Funds are available statewide to install a number of conservation practices including irrigation efficiency, cover crops, spring developments, protection of grazing lands, and other supporting components. The application sign-up period started **February 4 and runs through March 3, 2014.** For additional information, eligible landowners are encouraged to contact their local NRCS Service Center. [Service center locations](#) and more information on the drought initiative can be found at www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov.

Emergency Loans Authorized for California Drought in Multiple Counties

USDA has designated 54 of California's 58 counties as natural disaster areas due to drought, making them eligible for low interest Emergency (EM) Loans from Farm Service Agency (FSA). The maximum amount for an EM loan is \$500,000. For more information regarding the program, please see FSA's press release [here](#). Information on FSA's other credit programs is available by visiting this website [Managing Credit Needs](#).

Drought Assistance from Rural Development

Rural Development has several programs that may help rural communities, businesses, ag producers, farm workers and others impacted by California's ongoing drought. Opportunities include \$3 million in Emergency Community Water Assistance Grants (ECWAG) to help rural communities whose water supply is at risk. Additional help is available for homeowners that need help drilling a well or connecting to a community water system, food banks that anticipate increased demand, ag producers wanting to offset ag irrigation costs, and others. For a list of available programs, and local contacts, visit Rural Development's website <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ca>.

Updates

Almond Marking Order Continuance Referendum

Ballots will be mailed to over 6,500 almond growers on **February 14, 2014**. Almond growers who produced almonds in California from August 1, 2012 - July 31, 2013 are eligible to vote. A continuance referendum is required every five years. The voting period is **Tuesday, February 18, 2014 - Friday, March 7, 2014**. Eligible growers who do not receive a ballot may contact Maria Stobbe at Maria.Stobbe@ams.udag.gov, or 559-487-5901.

Census of Agriculture Results Coming Soon

Be on the lookout – NASS will release preliminary 2012 Census of Agriculture results on February 20. The results will be presented at the USDA Agricultural Outlook Forum and be available online at www.agcensus.usda.gov. The Census of Agriculture provides the most consistent and comprehensive information about conditions and trends in U.S. agriculture. Among the new information are statistics about biomass, Internet access, regional food marketing and distribution, land use practices, and agroforestry. NASS will announce a release date for the full report as soon as it is set. NASS delayed publication of the full 2012 Census of Agriculture as a result of the work stoppage caused by the lapse in federal funding in October 2013.

Funding Opportunities

Application Closing Date Nears for Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program

2014 Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) application closing dates for several crops are fast approaching. Please make sure to file an application for coverage and pay the service fee for your crop policy before these dates have passed. **March 1, 2014** is the last day to buy coverage for annual crops (tomatoes, peppers, carrots, etc.). For more information, please contact your local Farm Service Agency Office. A list is available at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ca>

Sales Closing Dates Near for Crop Insurance Programs

The USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) reminds producers that the sales closing dates for spring crop insurance programs is almost here. Producers should make sure to sign up,

review, or change their crop policy before the date has passed. The last day to buy or change a policy for rice, cultivated wild rice, corn, dry beans, cotton, extra-long staple cotton, figs, and grain sorghum is **February 28, 2014**. For barley, wheat and oats (in Lassen, Modoc, Shasta and Siskiyou counties) mint and potatoes (in Modoc and Siskiyou counties) the last day is **March 15, 2014**. Producers are encouraged to contact a crop insurance agent as soon as possible or you can find an agent on the RMA website at <http://www.rma.usda.gov/tools/agent.html>.

Deadline Nearing for Value-Added Producer Grants

Applications for Rural Development's Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program must be received by **February 24, 2014**. Maximum awards are \$75,000 for planning grants and \$200,000 for working capital grants. Interested applicants should visit Rural Development's website http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/BCP_VAPG.html for additional information including application templates and a link to the notice in the Federal Register. Questions can also be directed to Karen Firestein at karen.firestein@ca.usda.gov or 530-792-5829.

Reports and Publications

NASS Reports

[Crop Production](#) (02/10/2014)
[Preliminary Grape Crush Report](#) (02/10/2014)
[Fruit & Nut Review](#) (02/18/2014)
[Field Crop Review](#) (02/20/2014)
[Livestock Review](#) (02/28/2014)
[Poultry Report](#) (02/28/2014)

Other Activities & Events

USDA Webinar Series for the Fruit and Vegetable Industry

The [Agricultural Marketing Service's Fruit and Vegetable Program](#) invites you to take part in a series of free, interactive webinars on our many programs and services. At each webinar, you'll hear a presentation from a USDA expert on a specific topic, be introduced to our staff, and take part in an interactive question and answer session. These informative webinars are designed for fruit and vegetable growers, packers, shippers, processors, wholesalers, and retailers of all sizes. Registration is required and space is limited. Log on today to register – it's your first step to learning how we can work together to meet your unique business needs. If you miss a webinar, just visit our [Webinar Archive](#) to watch it online. If you have any question about our webinar series or USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, please contact Christopher Purdy at (202) 720-3209 or christopher.purdy@ams.usda.gov.

Upcoming Webinars:

How to Sell Domestic Foods to the USDA	March 20, 2014 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time	To register http://bit.ly/1jfHT4w
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An Overview of the PACA Complaint Process *	April 30, 2014 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time	To register. http://bit.ly/LypyRg
USDA Fresh Produce Inspection 101	May 22, 2014 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time	To register. http://bit.ly/1kUdwI2
An Introduction to the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act (PACA) *	June 26, 2014 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time	To register. http://bit.ly/1b1QnJZ

About Us

Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)

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Farm Service Agency (FSA)

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Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

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National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)

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Risk Management Agency (RMA)

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Rural Development (RD)

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Contact Us

If you would like to receive a copy of future newsletters or if you have relevant information for California producers that you want to include in a future issue of this newsletter, please email one of the contacts listed below. Please be advised that not all activities may be published.

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