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March 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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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>.

NRCS Conservation Drought Assistance to California Farmers & Ranchers

California has seen many droughts come and go, but 2014 is creating especially dire conditions for the State's farmers and ranchers. Information on [NRCS Drought Assistance](#) can be found at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ca/newsroom/features/>.

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](#).

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

Deadline Extended for Value-Added Producer Grants

The application deadline for Rural Development's Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program has been extended, and the new deadline will be posted in the Federal Register soon. For the most recent information on the program, please visit Rural Development's website http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/BCP_VAPG.html. Maximum awards are \$75,000 for planning grants and \$200,000 for working capital grants. Questions can also be directed to Karen Firestein at karen.firestein@ca.usda.gov or 530-792-5829.

USDA Releases First Look at Census of Agriculture

On February 20, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) released the 2012 Census of Agriculture preliminary results providing a first look at state and national data. The report included information on farm numbers, land in farms and farmer demographics. In 2012, California's number of farms decreased to 77,864, down 4 percent from 2007. In 2012, the value of agricultural products sold totaled \$42.6 billion in California, compared to \$33.9 billion in 2007. For more information about the Census, including access to the 2012 Census of Agriculture preliminary report and the full report when it is released in May, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov.

Funding Opportunities

Deadline for Conservation Innovation Grant Pre-Proposals is March 14, 2014

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in California has announced March 14, 2014, as the deadline to submit project pre-proposals for fiscal year 2014 Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG). CIG is a voluntary program intended to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies while leveraging federal

investment in environmental enhancement and protection, in conjunction with agricultural production. NRCS California is requesting CIG project pre-proposals that focus on water quality and quantity, air quality and climate change, energy conservation, waste recycling, and wildlife. The CIG announcement, with detailed proposal requirements, can be found at <http://www.grants.gov> or the California NRCS Programs webpage <http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/> or by contacting Erik Beardsley, state CIG program specialist, at Erik.Beardsley@ca.usda.gov

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 are 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 barley and wheat (in Lassen, Modoc, Shasta and Siskiyou counties), oats, mint (winter coverage option), and potatoes (in Modoc and Siskiyou counties) 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>.

Reports and Publications

NASS Reports

[Crop Production](#) (03/10/2014)

[Final Grape Crush Report](#) (03/10/2014)

[Valencia Orange Objective Measurement Report](#) (3/10/2014)

[Field Crop Review](#) (03/13/2014)

[Livestock Review](#) (03/28/2014)

[Poultry Report](#) (03/27/2014)

[Grape Acreage Summary Report](#) (3/28/2014)

Other Activities & Events

California Small Farm Conference, March 9-11, in Rohnert Park, California

The California Small Farm Conference is the state's premier gathering of small farmers, agricultural students, farmers' market managers and others involved in the small farm industry. The three day educational conference includes day-long short courses and on-farm tours; focused workshops; engaging keynote addresses and numerous networking opportunities. The mission of the organization is to conduct an educational conference on topics relevant to family farming, direct marketing and issues related to agricultural sustainability. Onsite registration is still available. For more information, call toll free **1-888-712-4188**, or email conference@californiafarmconference.com. Additional information can also be found online at www.californiafarmconference.com.

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
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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- [Risk Management Education & Outreach](#)

Rural Development (RD)

- [Overview of Programs](#)

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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