



USDA Offers Assistance to Virgin Islands Producers Impacted by Drought

News Release | Virgin Islands | June 24, 2021

Virgin Islands

Christiansted, V.I. - June 24, 2021 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reminds St. Croix, St. John and St. Thomas livestock producers that they may be eligible for financial assistance through the [Livestock Forage Disaster Program \(LFP\)](#) for 2021 grazing losses due to drought. The deadline to apply for 2021 assistance is Jan. 31, 2022.

"Livestock producers in the Virgin Islands continue to experience the impacts of severe drought conditions," said Christy Marshall, acting state executive director for USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) in Florida (providing FSA programs and services to the Virgin Islands). "FSA remains ready to respond to and assist producers with recovery from this ongoing disaster."

To date, for the 2021 LFP program year, St. Croix, St. John and St. Thomas have met drought ratings that trigger eligibility for livestock disaster assistance. For losses due to drought, qualifying drought ratings are determined using the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#). Producers are eligible for LFP payments for native and full season pasture types.

LFP provides payments to livestock owners and contract growers who also produce forage crops for grazing and suffered losses due to a qualifying drought during the normal grazing period for the county.

Eligible livestock include alpacas, beef cattle, buffalo/bison, beefalo, dairy cattle, deer, elk, emus, equine, goats, llamas, reindeer, or sheep that have been or would have been grazing the eligible grazing land or pastureland during the normal grazing period.

To expedite the application process, producers are encouraged to gather and submit records documenting 2021 losses. Supporting documents may include information related to grazing leases, contract grower agreements, and more.

Additional USDA Disaster Assistance for Drought

USDA encourages producers to contact the FSA county office at the local [USDA Service Center](#) to apply for eligible programs and to learn which documents, such as farm records, herd inventory, receipts and pictures of damages or losses should be provided to help expedite assistance.

Meanwhile, the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program](#) provides eligible producers with compensation for feed losses not covered by LFP as well as assistance with water hauling expenses. For ELAP, producers will need to file a notice of loss within 30 days and honeybee losses within 15 days.

Additionally, eligible orchardists and nursery tree growers may be eligible for cost-share assistance through the [Tree Assistance Program](#) (TAP) to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes or vines lost during drought. For this program, an application must be filed within 90 days. This complements [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#) (NAP) or crop insurance coverage, which covers the crop but not the plants or trees in all cases. Producers who have risk protection through FSA's NAP should report crop damage to their FSA office. A [Notice of Loss](#) (CCC-576) must be filed within 15 days of the loss becoming apparent, except for hand-harvested crops, which should be reported within 72 hours.

FSA also offers a variety of direct and guaranteed loans, including operating and emergency loans, to producers unable to secure commercial financing. Producers in counties with a primary or contiguous disaster designation may be eligible for low-interest [emergency loans](#) to help them recover from production and physical losses. Loans can help producers replace essential property, purchase inputs like livestock, equipment, feed and seed, cover family living expenses or refinance farm-related debts and other needs.

Conservation

The [Emergency Conservation Program](#) and [Emergency Forest Restoration Program](#) can assist landowners and forest stewards with financial and technical assistance to restore damaged farmland or forests.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) also offers programs to help in the recovery process. The [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQIP) can help producers plan and implement conservation practices on farms, ranches and working forests impacted by natural disasters. Practices include brush management, livestock watering facilities, prescribed grazing, silvopasture and livestock shelters. For more information, please contact USVI District Conservationist, Rudy G. O'Reilly, Jr., at rudy.o_reilly@usda.gov or 340-514-4262.

Assistance for Communities

Additional NRCS programs include the [Emergency Watershed Protection](#) (EWP) program, which provides technical and financial assistance through local government sponsors for addressing imminent threat to life (human) and/or property caused by severe erosion on streambanks caused by the drought. Sponsors must submit a formal request (via mail or email) to the state conservationist

and an emergency declaration must be issued related to the drought based on the merit of the cases received within 60 days of the natural disaster occurrence or 60 days from the date when access to the sites is possible. For more information, please contact Yilia Baucage-Bou, State Conservation Engineer, at yilia.baucagebou@usda.gov.

More Information

On farmers.gov, the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#) can help producers and landowners determine program or loan options. For FSA and NRCS programs, they should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#).

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov.

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Farm Service Agency:

1400 Independence Ave.
SW Washington, DC 20250

Contact:

FPAC Press Desk
FPAC.BC.Press@usda.gov