



USDA Offers Disaster Assistance to Vermont Farmers and Livestock Producers Impacted by Floods

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COLCHESTER, Vt. - August 7, 2023 - Vermont agricultural operations have been significantly impacted by recent catastrophic flooding across the state. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has technical and financial assistance available to help farmers and livestock producers recover. Impacted producers should contact their [local USDA Service Center](#) to report losses and learn more about program options available to assist in their recovery from crop, land, infrastructure and livestock losses and damages.

"USDA stands ready to assist Vermont farmers, livestock producers, landowners, and communities clean up and restore farmland, forests and watersheds in the aftermath of these devastating floods," said Robert Bonnie, Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC). "USDA employees are working diligently to deliver FPAC's extensive portfolio of disaster assistance programs and services. We're continuing to monitor the impacts of floods, freeze and other natural disasters on producers and will use all available resources to assist them." ??

USDA Disaster Assistance

Producers who experience livestock deaths may be eligible for the [Livestock Indemnity Program \(LIP\)](#). To participate in LIP, producers must provide verifiable documentation of death losses resulting from an eligible adverse weather event and must submit a notice of loss to their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) county office. The deadline to file a 2023 LIP notice of loss has been extended to Jan. 30, 2024.

Meanwhile, the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#) compensates eligible producers for hive loss, stored feed and grazing losses. The deadline to file a 2023 notice of loss for ELAP has been extended to Jan. 30, 2024.

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. This complements the [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program \(NAP\)](#) or crop insurance coverage, which covers the crop but not the plants or trees in all cases. The deadline to submit an application and supporting documentation for TAP assistance for 2023 losses has been extended to

Jan. 30, 2024.

"It's important to stay informed about the various programs that may be available to assist in the recovery efforts from these severe weather events and it is equally important that you contact your local FSA office to timely report all crop, livestock, and farm infrastructure damages and losses," said John Roberts, State Executive Director for FSA in Vermont. "Required documentation such as farm records, herd inventory, receipts, and pictures of damage or loss will help expedite FSA disaster assistance."

FSA also offers a variety of direct and guaranteed [farm loans](#), including operating and emergency farm loans, to producers who cannot 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. Additionally, FSA has a variety of loan servicing options available for borrowers who are unable to make scheduled payments on their farm loan debt to FSA because of reasons beyond their control.?

FSA reviewed disaster recovery program policies and is providing additional flexibilities for acreage reporting as well as price support and other disaster program assistance to allow producers in nine Northeast states, including Vermont, who were impacted by the flood more time to assess losses and damages and more time to report losses and apply for assistance. FSA is preparing to announce details soon.

Risk Management?

To expedite recovery assistance, USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) is authorizing emergency loss procedures to better assist Vermont agricultural producers who have risk protection through federal crop insurance and have been impacted by recent flooding.

Normally, producers are required to report crop damage to their crop insurance agent within 72 hours of damage discovery and follow up in writing within 15 days. In addition to other flexibilities, RMA is now enabling crop insurance companies to accept a delayed notice of loss from insureds while also streamlining the loss adjustment process to expedite the processing of claims.

"Crop insurance and other USDA risk management options are offered to help producers manage risk because we never know what nature has in store for the future," said Alexander Sereno, Director of RMA's Regional Office that covers Vermont. "The Approved Insurance Providers, loss adjusters, and agents are experienced and well-trained in handling these types of events."

For crops that are not eligible for federal crop insurance but are covered by an FSA [NAP](#) policy, a [notice of loss](#) must be filed with FSA within 15 days of the loss becoming apparent, FSA has waived the 72-hour notification requirements for hand-harvested and other applicable crops.

Producers who have not applied for NAP coverage may still be covered. FSA has [updated NAP](#) to remove barriers and establish procedures through which an underserved producer with a CCC-860, *Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification* on file prior to the applicable NAP application closing date will automatically receive basic coverage for any NAP-eligible crops. Like all NAP-covered producers, underserved producers will still need to file a notice of loss and apply for program benefits.?

Conservation?

FSA's [Emergency Conservation Program \(ECP\)](#) and [Emergency Forest Restoration Program \(EFRP\)](#) assists landowners and forest stewards with financial and technical assistance to restore fencing, remove debris, replace damaged irrigation system, land leveling and more. FSA has updated ECP policy to permit advance payments up to 25% of costs for all ECP practices.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers the [Emergency Watershed Protection \(EWP\)](#) program, which assists local government sponsors with the cost of addressing watershed impairments or hazards such as debris removal and streambank stabilization. The EWP Program is a recovery effort aimed at relieving imminent hazards to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms and other natural disasters. All projects must have an eligible project sponsor. NRCS may bear up to 75% of the eligible construction cost of emergency measures (90% within county-wide limited-resource areas as identified by the U.S. Census data). The remaining costs must come from local sources and can be in the form of cash or in-kind services.?

EWP is designed for installation of recovery measures to safeguard life and property as a result of a natural disaster. Threats that the EWP Program addresses are termed watershed impairments. These include, but are not limited to:

- Debris-clogged waterways.
- Unstable streambanks.
- Severe erosion jeopardizing public infrastructure.
- Wind-borne debris removal.?

Eligible sponsors include cities, counties, towns or any federally recognized Native American tribe or tribal organizations. Sponsors must be able to provide the local construction share, obtain permits and site access and agree to perform operations and maintenance of the constructed projects. Willing

sponsors must submit a formal assistance request (by mail or email) to the state conservationist within 60 days of the natural disaster occurrence or 60 days from the date when access to the sites become available. For more information, potential sponsors should contact their [local NRCS office](#).

"EWP provides immediate assistance to communities to mitigate potential hazards to life and property resulting from disasters and particularly the severe erosion and flooding that can occur," said Travis Thomason, State Conservationist for the NRCS in Vermont. "EWP allows us to work with local sponsors to help damaged watersheds so that lives and property are protected while preventing further devastation in the community."

More Information?

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

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