



# NEWSLETTER



May 2016

## SDA Regional Climate Change Hubs

**Rhode Island Service Agency**

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[www.fsa.usda.gov/ri](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ri)

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**State Executive**

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401-828-3120 Option 2

**County Committee:**

Doreen Pezza  
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401-828-3120 Option 3.

**Farm Loan Manager:**

Roxanne S. Boisse

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack established the first ever [USDA Regional Climate Change Hubs](http://climatehubs.oce.usda.gov) in February 2014 at seven locations around the country to provide more information to farmers, ranchers and forest landowners on the increasing risks of fires, pests, floods, and droughts associated with a changing climate. For information on the Climate Hub in your Region, visit <http://climatehubs.oce.usda.gov> and Click on the region to learn more.

## Tree Assistance Program (TAP) Sign-up

Orchardists and nursery tree growers who experience losses from natural disasters during calendar year 2015 must submit a TAP application either 90 calendar days after the disaster event or the date when the loss is apparent. TAP was authorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014 as a permanent disaster program. TAP provides financial assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines damaged by natural disasters.

Eligible tree types include trees, bushes or vines that produce an annual crop for commercial purposes. Nursery trees include ornamental, fruit, nut and Christmas trees that are produced for commercial sale. Trees used for pulp or timber are ineligible.

To qualify for TAP, orchardists must suffer a qualifying tree, bush or vine loss in excess of 15 percent mortality from an eligible natural disaster. The eligible trees, bushes or vines must have been owned when the natural disaster occurred; however, eligible growers are not required to own the land on which the eligible trees, bushes and vines were planted.

If the TAP application is approved, the eligible trees, bushes and vines must be replaced within 12 months from the date the application is approved. The cumulative total quantity of acres planted to trees, bushes or vines, for which a producer can receive TAP payments, cannot exceed 500 acres annually.

## **USDA Establishes New Partnerships to Link Underserved Farmers to FSA Programs**

*Minority, Women, New and Beginning, Military Veteran and Urban Producers to Receive Training and Information on Agency Services*

USDA announced cooperative agreements with 55 partners to educate farmers and other producers that have been underserved by USDA programs historically about Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs that provide financial, disaster or technical support. Nearly \$2.5 million will go to nonprofits, associations, universities, and foundations that will provide training and information on agricultural best practices, local networking opportunities, and more.

FSA, which solicited applications last fall, received nearly 100 proposals that requested over \$9 million in funding. Cooperative agreements, encompassing more than 28 states, will be between \$20,000 and \$75,000 each and several involve multi-state or national efforts. A list of awardees can be found at [www.fsa.usda.gov/outreach](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/outreach).

FSA also announced today that it is accepting proposals for consideration in the second evaluation period. Applications are due no later than July 11, 2016. Projects not selected during the first evaluation period will be reconsidered during the second period. Additional information on the funding solicitation and the related FSA programs can be found at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) using reference number USDA-FSA-CA-2016-001. For nonprofits and public institutions of higher education that are considering participation, a recording of the online informational session held with stakeholders is posted on the web at [www.fsa.usda.gov/outreach](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/outreach).

USDA is also helping producers find an entry into farming through urban agriculture opportunities and the increasing consumer demand for locally-produced items. Under this Administration, USDA has invested more than \$1 billion in over 40,000 local and regional food businesses and infrastructure projects. USDA is committed to helping farmers, ranchers, and businesses access the growing market for local and regional foods, which was valued at \$12 billion in 2014 according to industry estimates. More information on how USDA investments are connecting producers with consumers and expanding rural economic opportunities is available in [Chapter IV](#) of [USDA Results on Medium](#).

### **Filing a Notice of Loss**

The CCC-576, Notice of Loss, is used to report failed acreage and prevented planting and may be completed by any producer with an interest in the crop. Timely filing a *Notice of Loss* is required for all crops including grasses. For losses on crops covered by the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), you must file a CCC-576, *Notice of Loss*, in the FSA County Office within 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent or 15 calendar days after the normal harvest date.

Producers of hand-harvested crops must notify FSA of damage or loss through the administrative County Office within 72 hours of the date of damage or loss first becomes apparent. This notification can be provided by filing a CCC-576, email, fax or phone. Producers who notify the County Office by any method other than by filing the CCC-576 are still required to file a CCC-576, *Notice of Loss*, within the required 15 calendar days.

If filing for prevented planting, an acreage report and CCC-576 must be filed within 15 calendar days of the final planting date for the crop.

## Enrollment Period for 2016 USDA Safety Net Coverage Ends Aug. 1

Producers who chose coverage from the safety net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill, known as the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, can visit FSA county offices through Aug. 1, 2016, to sign contracts to enroll in coverage for 2016.

Although the choice between ARC and PLC is completed and remains in effect through 2018, producers must still enroll their farm by signing a contract each year to receive coverage.

Producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office to schedule an appointment to enroll. If a farm is not enrolled during the 2016 enrollment period, producers on that farm will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs should crop prices or farm revenues fall below the historical price or revenue benchmarks established by the program.

The two programs were authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill and offer a safety net to agricultural producers when there is a substantial drop in prices or revenues for covered commodities. 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 grain rice (which includes short grain and sweet rice), safflower seed, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat. Upland cotton is no longer a covered commodity. For more details regarding these programs, go to [www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc).

For more information, producers are encouraged to visit their local FSA office. To find a local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

## 2016 ACREAGE REPORTING DATES

In order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements, all producers are encouraged to visit the Rhode Island FSA office to file an accurate crop certification report by **July 15, 2016** for Annual crops.

Acreage reporting dates vary by crop and by county so please contact your local FSA office for a list of county-specific deadlines.

The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the applicable acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the applicable acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.
- If a perennial forage crop is reported with the intended use of “cover only,” “green manure,” “left standing,” or “seed,” then the acreage must be reported by July 15th.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP covered crops is the earlier of the applicable dates or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

For questions regarding crop certification and crop loss reports, please contact your local FSA office.

## New USDA Commitments to Help Build Up Next Generation of Farmers and Ranchers

USDA prioritized \$5.6 billion over the next two years within USDA programs and services that serve new and beginning farmers and ranchers. A new, tailored web tool was designed to connect burgeoning farm entrepreneurs with programs and resources available to help them get started.

The new web tool is available at [www.usda.gov/newfarmers](http://www.usda.gov/newfarmers). The site was designed based on feedback from new and beginning farmers and ranchers around the country, who cited unfamiliarity with programs and resources as a challenge to starting and expanding their operations. The site features advice and guidance on everything a new farm business owner needs to know, from writing a business plan, to obtaining a loan to grow their business, to filing taxes as a new small business owner. By answering a series of questions about their operation, farmers can use the site's *Discovery Tool* to build a personalized set of recommendations of USDA programs and services that may meet their needs.

Using the new web tool and other outreach activities, and operating within its existing resources, USDA has set a new goal of increasing beginning farmer and rancher participation by an additional 6.6 percent across key USDA programs, which were established or strengthened by the 2014 Farm Bill, for a total investment value of approximately \$5.6 billion. Programs were targeted for expanded outreach and commitment based on their impact on expanding opportunity for new and beginning farmers and ranchers, including starting or expanding an operation, developing new markets, supporting more effective farming and conservation practices, and having access to relevant training and education opportunities. USDA will provide quarterly updates on its progress towards meeting its goal. A full explanation of the investment targets, benchmarks and outcomes is available at: [BFR-Commitment-Factsheet](#).

As the average age of the American farmer now exceeds 58 years, and data shows that almost 10 percent of farmland in the continental United States will change hands in the next five years, we have no time to lose in getting more new farmers and ranchers established. Equally important is encouraging young people to pursue careers in industries that support American agriculture. According to [an employment outlook report](#) released by USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and Purdue University, one of the best fields for new college graduates is agriculture. Nearly 60,000 high-skilled agriculture job openings are expected annually in the United States for the next five years, yet only 35,000 graduates with a bachelor's degree or higher in agriculture related fields are expected to be available to fill them. The report also shows that women make up more than half of the food, agriculture, renewable natural resources, and environment higher education graduates in the United States. USDA recently released a [series of fact sheets](#) showcasing the impact of women in agriculture nationwide.

The announcement builds on USDA's ongoing work to engage its resources to inspire a strong next generation of farmers and ranchers by improving access to land and capital; building market opportunities; extending conservation opportunities; offering appropriate risk management tools; and increasing outreach and technical support. To learn more about USDA's efforts, visit the [Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Results Page](#).

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).