

[Back to News Releases](#)

USDA Offers Disaster Assistance to Farmers and Livestock Producers in Florida Impacted by Tropical Storm Eta

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VALDOSTA, Ga., Nov. 24, 2020 — Tropical Storm Eta’s flooding and high winds impacted Florida agricultural operations and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has technical and financial assistance available to help farmers and livestock producers recover. As agricultural producers move into recovery mode and assess damages, they 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.

“FSA has a variety of disaster assistance programs to support farmers and ranchers through times of adversity,” said Sherry McCorkle, state executive director for USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) in Florida. “Once you are able to evaluate impacts on your operation, it is important to contact your local FSA office to timely report all damages and losses and determine how we can assist.”

USDA encourages farmers and ranchers to contact the FSA county office at the local USDA Service Center to learn which documents should be provided to help the local office expedite assistance, such as farm records, receipts, and pictures of damages or losses.

Depending on the operation, FSA offers a number of disaster assistance programs to help offset eligible losses, including the [Livestock Indemnity Program](#), [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program](#), [Emergency](#)

[Conservation Program](#), [Emergency Forest Restoration Program](#), [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program \(NAP\)](#) and [Tree Assistance Program](#).

Additionally, producers located 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.

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 land impacted by natural disasters.

"NRCS can be a very valuable partner to help landowners with their recovery efforts," said Juan Hernandez, state conservationist for the NRCS in Florida. "Our staff will work one-on-one with landowners to make assessments of the damages and develop approaches that focus on effective recovery of the land."

Producers with Federal crop insurance coverage should contact their [crop insurance agent for assistance](#). Producers should report crop damage to their agent within 72 hours of damage discovery and follow up in writing within 15 days.

"Crop insurance is there to help producers manage risk because we never know what nature has in store for the future," said Davina Lee, director of the Risk Management Agency (RMA) Valdosta Regional Office that covers Florida. "The Approved Insurance Providers, loss adjusters and agents are experienced and well trained in handling these types of events."

Assistance for Communities

Additional NRCS programs include the [Emergency Watershed Protection \(EWP\)](#) program, which provides assistance to local government sponsors with the cost of addressing watershed impairments or hazards such as debris removal and streambank stabilization. Eligible sponsors include cities, counties, towns, conservation districts, or any federally recognized Native American tribe or tribal organization. When a watershed impairment occurs due to a natural disaster event, the district conservationist serves as the local facilitator for EWP activities. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is the lead federal agency for Presidentially declared natural disasters. All NRCS emergency work is coordinated

with FEMA or its designee. Sponsors must submit a formal request (via mail or email) to the state conservationist for assistance within 60 days of the natural disaster occurrence or 60 days from the date when access to the sites become available. For more information, please contact Jason Strenth, EWP program manager, at jason.strenth@usda.gov or (352) 338-9559.

In addition to EWP, Conservation Technical Assistance is another valuable service that NRCS can provide following a tropical storm.

More Information

Producers and landowners can use the online [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), answering five questions to identify USDA programs that will help meet disaster recovery needs.

For more information on all USDA disaster assistance programs, visit farmers.gov/recover, or contact your local USDA Service Center, which can be found at farmers.gov/service-center-locator. For assistance with a crop insurance claim, please contact your [crop insurance agent](#).

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[Back to News Releases](#)

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