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USDA Offers Disaster Assistance to Agricultural Producers in Maine Impacted by Drought

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(Raleigh, N.C., Oct. 30, 2026) – Agricultural operations in Maine have been significantly impacted by recent drought. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has technical and financial assistance available to help farmers and livestock producers recover from this adverse weather event.

“USDA has a suite of programs to support farmers and livestock producers as they recover from natural disasters,” said Farm Production and Conservation Under Secretary Richard Fordyce. “I encourage impacted producers to 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 Disaster Assistance

Livestock producers who suffered grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land may be eligible for the 2026 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP). To participate in LFP, producers must own, cash or share lease, or contract grow eligible livestock; provide pasture or grazing land to eligible livestock on the beginning date of the qualifying drought; and certify that they suffered a grazing loss due to drought. USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) maintains a list of counties eligible for LFP and makes updates each Thursday.

Producers who have a risk in the pasture or hay crop must have an acreage report for all grazing land for which a grazing loss is claimed. LFP applicants who lease acres must be able to support their application with either a written lease or an *Annual Lease Certification* (form CCC-855).

Producers must submit an LFP application for payment and supporting documentation no later than March 1, 2027, for 2026 losses.

Meanwhile, the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) provides eligible producers with compensation for feed and grazing losses. ELAP can also help offset the above normal economic impacts of transporting livestock to feed or hauling feed and water to sustain livestock through these disaster conditions. ELAP also assists commercial apiarists who experience a loss of feed due to drought conditions that may need to purchase short-term feed to sustain the honeybees until additional natural feedstock becomes available. For ELAP, producers are required to complete a notice of loss and submit an application for payment to their local FSA office no later than March 1, 2027, for 2026 calendar year losses.

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. TAP 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. For TAP, a program application must be filed within 90 days of the disaster event or the date when the loss of the trees, bushes or vines is apparent.

“Impacted producers should timely report all crop, livestock and farm infrastructure damages and losses to their local FSA county office as soon as possible,” said Tommy Higgins, State Executive Director for FSA in Maine. “As you evaluate your operation, take time to gather important documents you may need to get assistance, including farm records, herd inventory, receipts and pictures of damages or losses.”

FSA also offers a variety of direct and guaranteed farm loans, including operating and emergency farm 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.

Additionally, FSA offers several loan servicing options available for borrowers who are unable to make scheduled payments on their farm loan programs debt to the agency because of reasons beyond their control.

Risk Management

Producers with NAP coverage, including native grass for grazing, should report crop damage to their local FSA office and must file a Notice of Loss (CCC-576) within 15 days of the loss becoming apparent, except for hand-harvested crops, which should be reported within 72 hours.

Producers with risk protection through Federal Crop Insurance should report crop damage to their crop insurance agent within 72 hours of discovering damage and be sure to follow up in writing within 15 days.

“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 Pat Swanson, USDA’s Risk Management Agency (RMA) Administrator. “Disasters can be trying for producers, and they should stay in close contact with their crop insurance agent. Producers can be assured that the Approved Insurance Providers, loss adjusters and agents are experienced and well-trained in handling these types of events.”

Conservation

For drought recovery, FSA's Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) can help farmers and livestock producers implement emergency water conservation measures including watering systems for livestock and existing irrigation systems for orchards and vineyards. Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) can assist landowners and nonindustrial private forest stewards with financial assistance to restore nonindustrial private forests. For both ECP and EFRP, farmers and livestock producers should check with their local FSA office to find out about sign-up periods, which are set by the FSA County Committee.

Outside of the primary nesting season, emergency and non-emergency haying and grazing of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres may be authorized to provide relief to livestock producers in areas affected by a severe drought.

During the primary nesting season, emergency grazing of CRP is authorized at a 50% reduction of normal carrying capacity when a county triggers for the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) due to a qualifying drought. Additionally, non-emergency grazing can also be requested during the primary nesting season. Producers interested in haying or grazing of CRP acres should contact their county FSA office to determine eligibility.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can help farmers make their operation more resilient in the face of drought in future years. Through conservation planning and practices that will improve soil health and water conservation, farmers can reduce future crop loss due to drought and enhance resiliency. Financial help for implementing conservation practices may be available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

Long-term damage from drought can include forage production loss in pastures and fields and increased erosion on crop fields not protected with soil health practices. Producers can visit their local USDA Service Center to learn more about these impacts, potential recovery tactics and how to take steps to make their land more resilient to drought in the future.

"At USDA, we serve as a partner to help landowners with their resiliency and recovery efforts," said Walt Whitcomb, NRCS Assistant Chief for the North Region, which includes Maine. "Our staff will work one-on-one with landowners to make assessments of the damages and the means for effective recovery of the land and resources."

U.S. Drought Monitor

The U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM) is an online, weekly map showing the location, extent, and severity of drought across the United States. The USDM provides producers with the latest information about drought conditions where they live, enabling producers to best respond and react to a drought as it develops or lingers.

USDA uses the Drought Monitor to determine a producer's eligibility for certain drought assistance programs, like LFP and Emergency Haying or Grazing on CRP acres. Additionally, FSA uses the Drought Monitor to trigger and "fast track" Secretarial Disaster Designations, providing producers impacted by drought access to emergency loans to assist with credit needs.

The USDM incorporates varying data including rain, snow, temperature, streamflow, reservoir levels, soil moisture, etc. as well as first-hand information submitted from on-the-ground sources

such as photos, descriptions and experiences. You can contribute your observations to the USDM process using the Condition Monitoring Observer Report system or emailing droughtmonitor@unl.edu.

More Information?

Additional USDA disaster assistance information can be found on farmers.gov, including USDA resources specifically for producers impacted by drought. Those resources include the Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool, Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet, Loan Assistance Tool, and Natural Disasters and Crop Insurance fact sheet. For FSA and NRCS programs, producers should contact their local USDA Service Center. For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their crop insurance agent.

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Risk Management Agency:

Kevin Wooten, Director

Contact:

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