

December 2020



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Rhode Island FSA Newsletter

Rhode Island Farm Service Agency

Rhode Island State Office

60 Quaker Lane Suite 62
Warwick, RI 02886

Phone: 401-828-3120 Option 1.

www.fsa.usda.gov/ri

State Executive Director: W. Michael Sullivan

State Committee: Doreen Pezza, Kevin Breene, Judith Carvalho, David Frerichs, Ellen Puccetti

The State Committee meets the second Wednesday of every month subject to change.

Rhode Island County Office
Suite 49

Message from the State Executive Director

The strange and challenging season continues with periods of frost and outstanding wind events followed by balmy spring weather. Our FSA staff continue their work responsibilities and getting payments out from our current crisis programs.

The [Coronavirus Food Assistance Program \(CFAP2\)](#) continues to generate interest and is proving to be valuable to most Rhode Island producers. The FSA has received and approved a significant number of applications with payments to producers now exceeding \$1.5M. There is still time to apply and I certainly urge you to do so. This program is **NOT** a loan but is a direct deposit to your bank account in an effort to assist in maintaining farm production here in Rhode Island.

Please go to the website, <https://www.usda.gov/>, and review the options. The **DEADLINE** for applications is **December 11, 2020**. I don't know why any producer should pass up the funding so please apply or if you've questions or concerns give us a call.

Last month, USDA Secretary Purdue recognized and declared all five counties in Rhode Island as drought impacted. Our FSA County Office offers the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock and Farm Raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#) that can assist with animal water supply challenges and even address honeybee losses. Our FSA Farm Loan Team has available an [Emergency Loan including other types of Loans](#) that might be of interest to

Phone: 401-828-3120 Option 2.

County Executive Director: Sheryl Michener

County Committee: Kim Coulter, Gilbert Rathbun Jr., George Goulart Jr., John Sousa, Joseph Polseno

The County Committee meets the first Wednesday of every month subject to change.

Farm Loan Team

Suite 49

Phone: 401-828-3120 Option 3.

District Director: Mathew Richter

Farm Loan Analyst: Patricia Sullivan

you. The Secretary has acknowledged the extreme wind events that were recently experienced in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. This new Declaration is valuable if you've had tree or other crop losses due to the event. The Declaration applies to producers in Bristol, Kent, Newport, Providence and Washington Counties. Please help us to assist you and call in if you have a need and we'll do our best to assist.

Nothing Says Great Customer Service Like a Testimonial from Your Customer

To date, the Rhode Island County FSA office has received over 100 [Seafood Trade Relief Program \(STRP\)](#) applications and paid over half of them. The Seafood Trade Relief Program (STRP) is continuing until December 14, 2020. We have distributed over \$4.4M of assistance to our RI fleet. We hope to finish strong with those who have not yet applied. Recently, the office – and specifically employees Lillian Toth and Sheryl Michener – received a big thank you from local fishermen Roy and Sandra Campanale, of Campanale & Sons, Inc., for the speedy processing of their STRP application. STRP provides relief to U.S. fisherman impacted by retaliatory tariffs. [Read more about how this office has made a significant impact on the lives of local fisherman and their families.](#)

The staff here at USDA Farm Services Agency is going to be here to assist however we can in these challenging times. Agriculture in Rhode Island is a small community and we can and should pull together to survive and thrive even in difficult times.

Stay well friends,

W. Michael Sullivan

RI State Executive Director

Elections for the 2020 County Committee

It is important that every eligible producer participate in these elections because FSA county committees are a link between the agricultural community and the USDA. The 2020 election in Washington County will be conducted for the representative for Local Administrative Area (LAA): 3

County committee members are a critical component of FSA operations. Committees should be comprised of members who reflect the diversity of producers involved in production agriculture in Washington County. This means that producers representing underserved groups or communities should be on the committee to speak on behalf of their constituency.

Underserved producers are beginning, women and other minority farmers and ranchers and landowners and/or operators who have

limited resources. Other minority groups including Native American and Alaska Natives; persons under the poverty level, and persons that have disabilities are also considered underserved.

County committee election ballots were mailed to eligible voters on Nov. 2, 2020. The last day to return completed ballots to the Rhode Island FSA County USDA Service Center is Dec. 7, 2020.

For more information on eligibility to serve on FSA county committees, visit: fsa.usda.gov/elections.

Heirs' Property Landowners

USDA recently launched a new website for producers to find information on heirs' property.

Heirs' property is family owned land that is jointly owned by descendants of a deceased person whose estate did not clear probate. The descendants, or heirs, have the right to use the property, but they do not have a clear or marketable title to the property since the estate issues remain unresolved.

The 2018 Farm Bill authorized alternative documentation for heirs' property operators to establish a farm number. A farm number is required to be eligible for many different USDA programs, including lending, disaster relief programs, and participation in county committees.

For more information visit farmers.gov/manage/HeirsPropertyLandowners.

Additional USDA Programs and Services

USDA offers a variety of farm loan, risk management, disaster assistance, and conservation programs to support farmers, including heirs' property landowners once they have a farm number.

USDA also has several special provisions and resources for heirs' property landowners, including:

- Targeted funding through farm loans
- Crop insurance benefits
- Conservation program benefits

FSA Implements Set-Aside Loan Provision for Customers Impacted by COVID-19

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will broaden the use of the Disaster Set-Aside (DSA) loan provision, normally used in the wake of natural disasters, to allow farmers with USDA farm loans who are affected by COVID-19, and are determined eligible, to have their next payment set aside. In some cases, FSA may also set aside a second payment for farmers who have already had one payment set aside because of a prior designated disaster.

FSA direct loan borrowers will receive a letter with the details of the expanded Disaster Set-Aside authorities, which includes the possible set-aside of annual operating loans, as well as explanations of the additional loan servicing options that are available. To discuss or request a loan payment Set-Aside, borrowers should call or email the farm loan staff at their local FSA county office.

The set-aside payment's due date is moved to the final maturity date of the loan or extended up to twelve months in the case of an annual operating loan. Any principal set-aside will continue to accrue interest until it is repaid. This aims to improve the borrower's cashflow in the current production cycle.

FSA previously announced it was relaxing the loan-making process and adding flexibilities for servicing direct and guaranteed loans to provide credit to producers in need. Direct loan applicants and borrowers are encouraged to contact their local FSA county office to discuss loan making and servicing flexibilities and other needs or concerns. Customers participating in FSA's guaranteed loan programs are encouraged to contact their lender. Information on these flexibilities, and office contact information, can be found on farmers.gov/coronavirus.

FSA will be accepting most forms and applications by facsimile or electronic signature. Some services are also available online to customers with an eAuth account, which provides access to the farmers.gov portal where producers can view USDA farm loan information and certain program applications and payments. Customers can track payments, report completed practices, request conservation assistance and electronically sign documents. Customers who do not already have an eAuth account can enroll at farmers.gov/sign-in.

Rhode Island is Eligible for Emergency Loans

Bristol, Kent, Providence, Newport and Washington Counties have been declared as primary disaster areas due to drought that began on September 15, 2020. Under this designation, if you have operations in any primary or contiguous county, you are eligible to apply for low interest emergency loans.

Emergency loans help you recover from production and physical losses due to drought, flooding and other natural disasters or quarantine.

You have eight months from the date of the declaration to apply for emergency loan assistance. FSA will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability. You can borrow up to 100 percent of actual production or physical losses, to a maximum amount of \$500,000.

For more information about emergency loans, contact the Rhode Island Farm Loan team at 401-828-3120 Option 3.

Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybee, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)

ELAP provides emergency assistance to eligible livestock, honeybee, and farm-raised fish producers who have losses due to disease, adverse weather or other conditions, such as blizzards and wildfires, not covered by other agricultural disaster assistance programs.

Eligible losses include:

- **Livestock** - grazing losses not covered under the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP), loss of purchased feed and/or mechanically harvested feed due to an eligible adverse weather event, additional cost of transporting water because of an eligible drought and additional cost associated with gathering livestock to treat for cattle tick fever.
- **Honeybee** - loss of purchased feed due to an eligible adverse weather event, cost of additional feed purchased above normal quantities due to an eligible adverse weather condition, colony losses in excess of normal mortality due to an eligible weather event or loss condition, including CCD, and hive losses due to eligible adverse weather.
- **Farm-Raised Fish** - death losses in excess of normal mortality and/or loss of purchased feed due to an eligible adverse weather event.

If you've suffered eligible livestock, honeybee, or farm-raised fish losses during calendar year 2020, you must file:

- A notice of loss within 30 calendar days after the loss is apparent (15 days for honeybee losses)
- An application for payment by Jan. 30, 2021

The following ELAP Fact Sheets (by topic) are available online:

- [ELAP for Farm-Raised Fish Fact Sheet](#)
- [ELAP for Livestock Fact Sheet](#)
- [ELAP for Honeybees Fact Sheet](#)

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).