

[Back to News Releases](#)

## **USDA Offers Disaster Assistance and Program Flexibilities to Farmers and Livestock Producers in Florida Impacted by Hurricane Ian**

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**GAINESVILLE, Fla.**, Oct. 14, 2022 — Florida agricultural operations have been significantly impacted by Hurricane Ian and related weather events. 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.

“Production agriculture is vital to the Florida economy, and USDA stands ready to assist in the recovery from Hurricane Ian,” said Robert Bonnie, Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation. “I assure you that USDA employees are working diligently to deliver USDA’s extensive portfolio of disaster assistance programs and services to all impacted agricultural producers.”

### **USDA Disaster Assistance**

Producers who experience livestock deaths may be eligible for the [Livestock Indemnity Program](#) (LIP).

Meanwhile, for hurricane recovery, the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program](#) (ELAP) provides eligible producers with compensation for feed and grazing losses. For ELAP, producers will need to file a

notice of loss within 30 days and honeybee losses within 15 days.

Additionally, eligible citrus producers, 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. TAP complements [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.

“Once you are able to safely evaluate the impact on your operation, be sure to contact your local FSA office to timely report all crop, livestock and farm infrastructure damages and losses. If your local FSA office is closed, you can contact the FSA Call Center at 1-877-508-8364 for assistance information and to report losses. The line is staffed Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET,” said Deborah Tannenbaum, State Executive Director for FSA in Florida. “To expedite FSA disaster assistance, you will likely need to provide documents, such as 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 has a variety of loan servicing option 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**

To expedite recovery assistance for producers in need, USDA’s Risk Management Agency (RMA) is authorizing emergency loss procedures to better assist Florida agricultural producers with crop insurance who have been impacted by Hurricane Ian.

Normally, producers are required to file a notice of loss for crop damage to their 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. Producers who have risk protection through [Federal Crop Insurance](#) should start the process by filing a notice of loss to their crop insurance agent.

“Crop insurance and other USDA risk management options are there to help producers manage risk because we never know what nature has in store for the future. These program flexibilities allow impacted producers much-needed time to assess agricultural damages and losses while tending to the many competing priorities in their post-hurricane lives,” said Davina Lee, Director of RMA’s Valdosta Regional Office that covers Florida. “The crop insurance companies, loss adjusters and agents are experienced and well trained in handling these types of events.”

To prepare for future hurricanes, producers in coastal areas should consult their local crop insurance agent to learn more about [Hurricane Insurance Protection – Wind Index](#). This policy provides prompt payment to producers after a hurricane.

For crops covered by an FSA [NAP](#) policy, a [Notice of Loss \(CCC-576\)](#) must be filed with FSA within 15 days of the loss becoming apparent, except for hand-harvested crops, which should be reported within 72 hours.

## **Conservation**

FSA’s [Emergency Conservation Program](#) (ECP) and [Emergency Forest Restoration Program](#) (EFRP) can assist landowners and forest stewards with financial and technical assistance to restore fencing, damaged farmland or forests.

USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is always available to provide technical assistance in the recovery process by assisting producers to plan and implement conservation practices on farms, ranches and working forests impacted by natural disasters. 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.”

## **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, or any federally recognized Native American Tribe or Tribal organization. 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, they 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 following hurricanes,” Hernandez said. “We can work with a local sponsor to help a damaged watershed so that lives and property are protected while preventing further devastation in the community.”

## **More Information**

On [farmers.gov](#), the [Hurricane resources webpage](#), [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster Assistance-at-a-Glance](#) fact sheet, and [Farm Loan Discovery 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](#).

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is transforming America’s food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a

workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit [usda.gov](https://usda.gov).

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[Back to News Releases](#)

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