



NEWS RELEASE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE - FARM SERVICE AGENCY

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Tanya Brown
202-690-4585
Tanya.brown@wdc.usda.gov

USDA Designates 6 Counties in Arizona as Primary Natural Disaster Areas With Assistance to Producers in New Mexico

WASHINGTON, Feb. 26, 2014 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has designated six counties in Arizona as primary natural disaster areas due to the recent drought.

The counties are:

Cochise	Graham	Pima
Gila	Maricopa	Pinal

“Our hearts go out to those Arizona farmers and ranchers affected by recent natural disasters,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “President Obama and I are committed to ensuring that agriculture remains a bright spot in our nation’s economy by sustaining the successes of America’s farmers, ranchers, and rural communities through these difficult times. We’re also telling Arizona producers that USDA stands with you and your communities when severe weather and natural disasters threaten to disrupt your livelihood.”

Farmers and ranchers in the following contiguous counties in Arizona also qualify for natural disaster assistance. Those counties are:

Apache	Greenlee	Navajo	Yavapai
Coconino	La Paz	Santa Cruz	Yuma

Farmers and ranchers in the following counties in **New Mexico** also qualify for natural disaster assistance because their counties are contiguous. Those counties are:

Hidalgo

All counties listed above were designated natural disaster areas on Feb. 26, 2014, making all qualified farm operators in the designated areas eligible for low interest emergency (EM) loans from USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA), provided eligibility requirements are met. Farmers in eligible counties have eight months from the date of the declaration to apply for loans to help cover part of their actual losses. FSA will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability. FSA has a variety of programs, in addition to the EM loan program, to help eligible farmers recover from adversity.

The Obama Administration remains committed to helping the thousands of farm families and businesses struggling with natural disasters. Actions taken by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack in 2012 to provide assistance to producers impacted by the drought included:

- Extended emergency grazing on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres, freeing up a record 2.8 million acres and as much as \$200 million in forage and feed for ranchers during a challenging time.
- Purchased \$170 million of pork, lamb, chicken, and catfish for federal food nutrition assistance programs, including food banks, to help relieve pressure on American livestock producers and bring the nation’s meat supply in line with demand.
- Reduced the emergency loan rate, from 3.75 percent to 3.00 percent, as well as making

emergency loans available earlier in the season.

- Allowing haying or grazing of cover crops without impacting the insurability of planted 2013 spring crops.
- USDA worked with crop insurance companies to provide flexibility to farmers, and one-third of all policyholders took advantage of the extended payment period.
- Authorized \$16 million in existing funds from the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to target states experiencing exceptional and extreme drought.
- Transferred \$14 million in unobligated program funds into the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) to help farmers and ranchers rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters and for carrying out emergency water conservation measures in periods of severe drought.
- Authorized haying and grazing of Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) easement areas in drought-affected areas where haying and grazing is consistent with conservation of wildlife habitat and wetlands.
- Lowered the penalty on CRP (Conservation Reserve Program) acres used for emergency haying or grazing, from 25 percent to 10 percent in 2012.
- Simplified the Secretarial disaster designation process and reduced the time it takes to designate counties affected by disasters by 40 percent.

Additional programs available to assist farmers and ranchers include the Emergency Conservation Program, Federal Crop Insurance, and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program. Interested farmers may contact their local USDA Service Centers for further information on eligibility requirements and application procedures for these and other programs. Additional information is also available online at <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov>.

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