



### Parishes Included in Disaster Declaration

Several Louisiana parishes have been announced by the USDA as primary or contiguous disaster areas due to adverse weather this spring. This declaration allows producers in those parishes to apply for low interest emergency loans through their local Farm Service Agency offices. The following table shows the parishes there were included in one of four declarations recently released by FSA. Typically, when disaster declarations are made, producers in those parishes are eligible for emergency loans associated with crop production losses and physical losses (damage to farm structures like barns, equipment sheds, etc). However, in two of the declarations, emergency assistance is only available for physical losses and not for any associated crop production losses.

Declaration Date	Primary Disaster Parishes	Contiguous Disaster Parishes	Cause of Damage	Type of Damage Covered	Deadline for Loan Application
April 24, 2009	Natchitoches Sabine	Bienville DeSoto Grant Rapides Red River Vernon Winn	Heavy Wind and Hail	Physical Losses Only (No Crop Production Losses)	April 30, 2010
April 24, 2009	None	Morehouse Union	Tornadoes, High Winds, Lightening, and Hail	Physical Losses Only (No Crop Production Losses)	April 30, 2010
April 27, 2009	None	Bossier Caddo Morehouse Union	Severe Storms and Tornadoes	Production and Physical Losses	April 30, 2010
May 14, 2009	None	Concordia East Feliciana St Helena Tangipahoa Washington West Feliciana	Severe Storms, Flooding, and Tornadoes	Production and Physical Losses	May 31, 2010

Again, at this time, these declarations only allow producers in these parishes to apply for emergency loan assistance. It does not qualify them for any other form of assistance. Producers interested in applying for emergency loans or wanting more information about potential assistance are encouraged to contact their local Farm Service Agency office.

## USDA Rural Development Energy Related Projects

The USDA's Rural Development agency recently released three programs that are aimed at providing assistance for renewable energy and energy efficiency improvements. All of the programs come under the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP). The three programs are:

- **REAP/Energy Audit and Renewable Energy Development Assistance** – provides grants up to \$100,000 for energy audits and renewable energy development assistance. The grants are awarded on a competitive basis. Governmental entities, institutions of higher education, rural electric cooperatives can apply for these funds to provide energy audits and renewable energy development assistance to agricultural producers and rural small businesses to help them become more energy efficient and to adopt more renewable technologies. Recipients of energy audits are required to pay at least 25 percent the cost of the audit.
- **REAP/Renewable Energy Systems/Energy Efficiency Improvement Program** – provides grants up to \$500,000 for renewable energy systems and grants up to \$250,000 for energy efficiency improvements. The grants are awarded on a competitive basis and can be up to 25 percent of the total eligible project costs. The program is open to producers who generate 50 percent or more of their gross income from agricultural operations as well as to small businesses that are located in rural areas. Most rural projects that reduce energy use and result in savings for the agricultural producer or small business are eligible as energy efficiency projects. These include projects such as retrofitting lighting or insulation, or purchasing or replacing equipment with more efficiency units. Eligible renewable energy projects include projects that produce energy from wind, solar, biomass, geothermal, hydro power and hydrogen-based sources.
- **REAP/Feasibility Program** - provides grants up to \$50,000 for renewable energy feasibility studies. The grants are awarded on a competitive basis and can be up to 25 percent of the total eligible project costs. The program is open to producers who generate 50 percent or more of their gross income from agricultural operations as well as to small businesses that are located in rural areas. Eligible feasibility studies for renewable energy systems include projects that will produce energy from wind, solar, biomass, geothermal, hydro power and hydrogen-based sources. The energy to be produced includes, heat, electricity, or fuel.

Applications for all three programs are due by July 31, 2009. Interested parties are encouraged to contact USDA Rural Development for additional information. The contact information for Rural Development is

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## Louisiana Specialty Crops Competitiveness Program

The Louisiana Department of Agriculture recently released a request for applications for the 2009 Louisiana Specialty Crops Competitiveness Program. This program is part of the the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 authorized by the US Department of Agriculture. Through this legislation, Louisiana is able to receive funds for a Specialty Crop Block Grant program which it then can provide to producers and other entities to conduct projects that enhance the competitiveness of Louisiana grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. These projects must be completed within three years after the grant agreement is signed. The amount of base funds available to Louisiana for this program is \$337,593. Specialty crops for the purpose of this program are defined as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture).

Applications for grant funds must describe how the project potentially impacts and produces measurable outcomes for the specialty crop industry and/or public rather than a single organization, institution, or individual. Grant funds **will not** be awarded for projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual. An example of an acceptable project is a single grower erects high tunnels on their property to extend the growing season of vegetables and works in conjunction with the Cooperative Extension Service to conduct field days and farm tours to demonstrate the effectiveness of this new technology to other farmers. An example of an unacceptable project is a farming operation requests funds to purchase starter plants or equipment for specialty crop production for the purpose of making a profit, or to expand production of a single operation.

Applications for the Specialty Crop Competitiveness program must be received by the Louisiana Department of Agriculture by Friday, July 24, 2009. Interested parties are encouraged to contact the Louisiana Department of Agriculture for additional information and application procedures. The contact within the Louisiana Department of Agriculture is

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