



STATE OF FLORIDA

DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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USDA DECLARES 60 FLORIDA COUNTIES AS PRIMARY NATURAL DISASTER AREAS DUE TO COLD WEATHER LOSSES

TALLAHASSEE -- Governor Charlie Crist and Florida emergency management officials today announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has determined that there were sufficient crop losses caused by cold weather and freezing conditions January 2 through January 14, 2010 to warrant a Secretarial Disaster Declaration in 60 Florida counties.

On January 15 Governor Crist sent a letter to USDA Secretary Thomas Vilsack requesting a disaster designation for all 67 counties in Florida after the state experienced unusually cold weather.

"We are grateful to Secretary Vilsack and our federal partners at the USDA for granting this needed disaster assistance to Floridians," said Governor Crist. "The USDA designation will assist our agricultural industry in obtaining economic relief for losses sustained during the exceptionally long freezing temperatures last month."

This designation makes farm operators in these counties eligible to be considered for assistance from the Farm Service Agency (FSA), provided eligibility requirements are met. Potential assistance includes FSA emergency loans and the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments Program (SURE) that was approved as part of the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008. The FSA will consider each application on its own merit by taking into account the extent of losses, security available, and repayment ability.

"Disasters often occur over wide areas," said David Halstead, interim director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management. "Under the declaration, farm operators in the contiguous counties of Clay, Jackson, Seminole and Walton are also eligible to apply for assistance if they suffered production losses."

(MORE)

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The 60 designated counties include:

Alachua	Dixie	Highlands	Manatee	Polk
Baker	Duval	Hillsborough	Marion	Putnam
Bay	Flagler	Holmes	Martin	Sarasota
Bradford	Franklin	Indian River	Miami-Dade	St. Johns
Brevard	Gadsden	Jefferson	Monroe	St. Lucie
Broward	Gilchrist	Lafayette	Nassau	Sumter
Calhoun	Glades	Lake	Okeechobee	Suwannee
Charlotte	Gulf	Lee	Orange	Taylor
Citrus	Hamilton	Leon	Osceola	Union
Collier	Hardee	Levy	Palm Beach	Volusia
Columbia	Hendry	Liberty	Pasco	Wakulla
De Soto	Hernando	Madison	Pinellas	Washington

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>.

For more information on the Florida Division of Emergency Management and to GET A PLAN!, please visit: www.FloridaDisaster.org. All students, teachers and parents can find educational information and free downloadable materials at: www.KidsGetAPlan.com. And for the latest flash reports go to: www.YouTube.com/FloridaSERT.

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