

Agriculture-Related Disaster Guidance

ASSISTANCE FOLLOWING AN AGRICULTURE-RELATED DISASTER

(Cont'd)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR REQUESTING A U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA) SECRETARIAL DISASTER DESIGNATION

Agricultural disasters caused by drought, flood, fire, freeze, winds, and other calamities substantially affect farmers and ranchers throughout California every year. The following sequence of events provides information for requesting a USDA Secretarial designation.

Each county should determine which entity (e.g., Board of Supervisors, County Emergency Services Manager, or County Agricultural Commissioner's Office) has the lead in coordinating a request for a USDA Secretarial designation. A local proclamation of an emergency is not required to request an USDA Secretarial designation; therefore, the Board of Supervisors' involvement in this procedure will differ from county to county. However, each county should establish a coordination plan to ensure that the applicable parties are aware of the situation.

- A natural disaster causes severe physical property or production losses adversely affecting local farmers, ranchers, and/or aquaculturists.
- The county (typically the County Agricultural Commissioner) informs the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) of the situation. The Cal OES Individual Assistance (IA) Branch will provide the county with a copy of the *California County Agricultural Commissioner Disaster Report* form, technical assistance, and follow up with any request for assistance, if necessary.
- The county has 60 days from the end of the incident to request a USDA disaster designation through Cal OES.
- The county submits a letter to the Director of Cal OES requesting the state to pursue a USDA disaster designation on behalf of the county, including a completed California County Agricultural Commissioner Disaster Report form(s).
- Cal OES IA Branch will review the request and coordinate with the USDA State Office.
- If damage estimates warrant a request to USDA, Cal OES will compose a letter to the USDA Secretary of Agriculture requesting implementation of the Emergency Loan Program.
- Cal OES must submit the request to USDA no later than 3 months from the end of the incident.

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- The USDA Secretary's office notifies the USDA State Office in Davis of the request and asks for a Loss Assessment Report (LAR).
- USDA State office requests the local Farm Services Agency (FSA) office, in conjunction with the Agricultural Commissioner, to complete the LAR.
- FSA will work with local USDA agencies and other federal, state, and local agricultural agencies, as appropriate, to conduct an assessment of crop and production losses to complete the LAR.
- The LAR is submitted to the State FSA office. State FSA will review the LAR and then make a recommendation to the USDA Secretary.
- The USDA Secretary will either approve or deny the request and notify the State.
- Cal OES will notify the County Board of Supervisors, County OES, and County Agricultural Commissioner of the decision.
- If the request is approved, the county FSA office notifies farmers, ranchers, and aquaculturists of the availability of the emergency loans and any other USDA assistance that may be available.

SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR SEVERE/EXTREME DROUGHT

The USDA FSA revised its disaster designation process in the 7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) – Agriculture, Part 1945, which includes a procedure for the nearly automatic drought designation based on the U.S. Drought Monitor (<http://www.droughtmonitor.unl.edu>). The USDA Secretary will designate a disaster area when a county meets the drought intensity level of at least D2 (Drought-Severe) for 8 consecutive weeks in any portion of the county, or has a portion of its area in a drought intensity value of D3 (Drought-Extreme) or higher at any time during the growing season of the affected crops.

This process does not require the County to submit a request for a disaster designation. However, counties that do not meet the automatic drought designation criteria, or have losses for drought outside of the identified disaster period may follow the process outlined on pages 9 and 10 of this guidance document for requesting a disaster designation through Cal OES.