

## **Hurricane Irene & Tropical Storm Lee Flooding Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Agribusinesses & Agricultural Producers**

### **How Do I Report Damages?**

- If the farmer has *personal property damage/loss* they should report the damage to the 1-800-621-FEMA number or report to their county Disaster Recovery Center.
- If the farmer has *production/operational oriented damage* it is very important they report this to the USDA FSA office in their respective county and in addition if the farmer has crop damage, it is very important they deal with their crop insurance agent and the USDA Risk Management Agency who administers the crop insurance program.
- Small agricultural cooperatives or agribusinesses located in a declared disaster area may be eligible for disaster loan assistance by contacting the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) by visiting [http://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/Factsheet%20PA%2012822\\_0.pdf](http://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/Factsheet%20PA%2012822_0.pdf). The Disaster Assistance Customer Service Center can be reached at 800-659-2955

### **Are Crops that Touch Floodwater Safe for Human Consumption?**

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) advises any part of fruit and vegetable crops that come in contact with flood water may have been exposed to sewage, heavy metals, pathogenic microorganisms, industrial chemicals, petroleum products or other contaminants. In addition to direct presence of contaminants, mold and toxins may develop in crops and food products as a result of exposure to the flood water. There is no practical method of reconditioning these crops that will provide a reasonable assurance of safety for human food. For these reasons, the crops are considered adulterated and the Department of Agriculture does not recommend harvesting them.

To read FDA's guidance for industry visit the following link: [Evaluating the Safety of Flood-affected Food Crops for Human Consumption](#)

### **What is the Final Disposition of Crops that Touch Floodwater?**

FDA advises that flood-damaged crops should be segregated or otherwise disposed of to ensure they do not contaminate unaffected crops during harvesting, storage, and distribution. Disposition of crops in proximity to, or exposed to a lesser degree of flooding, where the edible portion of the crop has NOT come in contact with flood waters, may need to be evaluated on a case by case basis. Factors to consider in evaluation include:

- What is the source of flood waters and are there potential upstream contributors of human pathogens and/or chemical contaminants?
- The type of crop and stage of its growth. For example, is the edible portion of the crop developing? How far above the ground does the lowest edible portion grow?
- Was the crop exposed to prolonged periods of moisture and stress which could foster fungal growth, and possibly, development of mycotoxins?

***Possible Disposal Options*** – On-farm disposal; biofuels production; boiler fuel; waste-to-energy facility; landfill disposal. This information is made available [2011 Handling and Disposal of Flood Damaged Crops](#)

If you have crop insurance, it is critical that you obtain written permission from the crop insurance agents before anything is done to the affected crops or until insurance agents can properly assess the extent of damage. More information on crop insurance can be found on the PDA homepage at [www.agriculture.state.pa.us](http://www.agriculture.state.pa.us) under “2011 Flood Information.”

***What is the Final Disposition of Ornamental Crops that Touch Floodwater?***

FDA advises that ornamental crops like gourds and pumpkins are food and should be handled the same as other food crops impacted by flood water.

***Can Floodwater-affected Crops be Diverted to Animal Feed?***

FDA advises that crops that touch flood water as harvested (without drying or further processing) would not be acceptable for use in animal feed. To even be considered for use in animal feed, these crops should be cleaned and heat treated AND tested for contaminants.

A list of minimum contaminant testing can be found on the document [2011 Handling and Disposal of Flood Damaged Crops](#)

***Can Grains Harvested from Floodwater-affected Crops be Heat-treated to Kill Toxins and Make the Feed Safe?***

Processing grains through drying and/or heat treatments may impact microbial pathogen populations but will not reduce levels of chemicals, heavy metals, mycotoxins, or other contaminants that may be present.

Producers must be aware that by choosing to harvest and use flood water adulterated crops as animal feed, they will assume the liabilities associated with the potential problems of this feed.

***Can Floodwater-affected Crops be Diverted for Energy Purposes?***

Flood-affected crops may be diverted for ethanol production for energy and fuel purposes but not for human consumption. The by-product, distillers dried grains, produced in ethanol production and used in animal feed, may have elevated levels of potential contaminants due to concentration in the by-product, therefore rendering the animal feed adulterated. For this reason, flood-affected grains diverted for ethanol production should be separated from non-adulterated grains before production at the ethanol facility. Affected grains by-products could be considered for other energy purposes such as pellets.

This information is made available [2011 Handling and Disposal of Flood Damaged Crops](#)

***Can Contaminants from Adulterated Feed be Transferred to the Final Meat or Milk Product?***

Animal consumption of flood damaged crops containing potential contaminants may lead to unacceptable residue levels in food products derived from those animals. Consumption of contaminated crops may cause animal production losses. There are recognized analytical methods to determine levels of potential contaminants in animal feed and food.

### **Are Fields that Touched Floodwater Hazardous to Grazing Livestock?**

The Food and Drug Administration considers pastures grazed by animals to be crops therefore pastures touched by floodwater should be considered adulterated. More information on pasture and forage is available: [Managing Flood Damaged Forage and Pasture](#)

### **Are Crops Flooded by Stream or Spring Water Safer Than Those Flooded by River Water?**

There is no distinction between these types of flood waters.

### **Should Crops Flooded by Standing or Pooled Water from Excessive Rain be Treated Differently than Crops Flooded by Bodies of Water?**

Producers should determine if the flooding in their fields was from standing water associated with excessive rain pooling or if the flooding was caused by river or stream flooding. If it's determined the flooding was from standing water and not river or stream flooding, the producer should attempt to assess the likely contaminants and have testing done pre-harvest.

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**Contact your local FSA office for economic assistance at:**

<http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=pa&agency=fsa>

#### **Conservation Programs**

**Emergency Conservation Program (ECP):** Provides emergency funding and technical assistance to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters. Eligible practices include debris removal, grading, shaping, re-leveling, restoring permanent fences, and restoring conservation structures.

*USDA Farm Service Agency*

**Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP):** The program provides technical and financial assistance to preserve life and property threatened by excessive erosion and flooding. Owners, managers and users of public, private or tribal lands are eligible for EWP assistance if their watershed area has been damaged by a natural disaster.

*USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service*

**Emergency Watershed Protection Program – Floodplain Easements:** Provides for the purchase of floodplain easements as an emergency measure. Floodplain easements restore, protect, maintain and enhance the functions of the floodplain; conserve natural values including fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, flood water retention, ground water recharge and open space; reduce long-term federal disaster assistance; and safeguard lives and property from floods, drought and the products of erosion.

*USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service*

**Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP):** Provides payments to eligible owners of nonindustrial private forest land to carry out measures to restore land damaged by a natural disaster.

*USDA Farm Service Agency*

**Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments Program (SURE):** Provides compensation to eligible producers on NAP coverable or insurable crop losses on prevented planted acreage, reduced production on planted acres, reduced quality on certain crops and/or on value loss crops including nursery and aquaculture. Producers must have crop insurance or NAP coverage on all crops to be eligible and a portion of the farming operation must be located in a county declared a primary or contiguous Secretarial Disaster.

*USDA Farm Service Agency*

**Tree Assistance Program for Orchardists and Nursery Tree Growers (TAP):** Provides financial assistance to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, shrubs or vines damaged by natural disasters. Producers must have crop insurance or NAP coverage on the eligible crop. For example, apples must be covered for apple trees to be eligible.

*USDA Farm Service Agency*

**Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP):** Provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory or prevented planting occur as the result of a natural disaster. Producers must have obtained NAP coverage by the sales closing date for the crop, similar to crop insurance.

*USDA Farm Service Agency*

### **Livestock, Honeybees and Farm Raised Fish Programs**

**Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP):** Provides compensation for death losses of eligible livestock in excess of normal mortality. Losses must be due to an eligible disaster condition, and livestock must be maintained as part of a commercial farming operation.

*USDA Farm Service Agency*

**Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees and Farm-Raised Fish (ELAP):** Provides compensation for losses *not* covered under any other disaster program, specifically LFP, LIP and SURE. Program compensates for eligible death losses, loss of stored feed and excess feed costs when expenses are incurred due to eligible disaster conditions. In certain cases, producers must have crop insurance or NAP coverage to qualify, depending on the losses claimed.

*USDA Farm Service Agency*

### **Loan Programs**

**Emergency Loans:** Eligible producers may obtain a low interest loan to assist in recovering from disaster events. A disaster designation (Presidential, Secretarial or Administrator's Physical Loss Notification) must be made for the county. Loan proceeds must be used for eligible expenses.

*USDA Farm Service Agency*

**U.S. Small Business Administration Loans:** Whether you rent or own your home, own your own business, or own a small agricultural cooperative located in a declared disaster area and are the victim of a disaster, you may be eligible for financial assistance.

*U.S. Small Business Administration*

Visit [http://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/Factsheet%20PA%2012822\\_0.pdf](http://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/Factsheet%20PA%2012822_0.pdf) for information about loans available and deadlines for filing. Call Disaster Assistance Customer Service Center at 800-659-2955

### **Other Programs**

**PAgrows:** PAgrows helps agribusinesses access the money they need to begin, continue and expand their business. It provides one-on-one on farm assistance and presentations to various stakeholder groups. PAgrows also works directly with other state and federal agencies as well as their statewide service providers to help make the process of finding the right program and seeing it through to completion as simple as possible.

*PA Department of Agriculture*

Call 1-888-724-7697 or visit [www.PAgrows.com](http://www.PAgrows.com)

**Food Safety:** Knowing how to minimize potential loss of food and reduce the risk of food borne illness will help you keep your family safe during an emergency. The [www.EatSafePA.com](http://www.EatSafePA.com) website provides consumers with a wealth of information about food safety during emergency situations.

*PA Department of Agriculture*

Call 1-866-366-3723

**Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA):** Provides financial and reemployment assistance to certain individuals whose employment has been lost or interrupted as a direct result of a major disaster.

*PA Department of Labor and Industry*

Call 1-877-345-3382

**Housing Assistance:** The [www.pahousingsearch.com/](http://www.pahousingsearch.com/) website is a free service to list and find affordable homes and apartments across Pennsylvania. The service is to help those displaced by the September flooding, and provides links to help you find the help you need.

*Program sponsored by various PA state agencies.*

Call 877-428-8844

For more information on FSA ([www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)) and NRCS ([www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)) programs, contact your county FSA/NRCS office. Phone numbers are available in the U.S. Government section of your phone book. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): 1-800-621-FEMA

*Note: Varying eligibility requirements may apply to all programs listed.*