

Agricultural Report

Connecticut Department of Agriculture
 Dannel P. Malloy, Governor
 Steven K. Reviczky, Commissioner



Wednesday, April 11, 2018

FARMLAND RESTORATION PROGRAM BRINGS LAND BACK INTO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Mark Hood, Bureau of Agricultural Development and Resource Conservation

The Farmland Restoration Program (FLRP) has provided approximately \$3.6 million of funding to farm projects that increase Connecticut's agricultural land resource base since its creation by Governor Dannel P. Malloy in 2011, and has leveraged approximately \$5.6 million in matching funds.

To date, 255 applications have been received and more than 1,000 acres of farmland have been restored under the FLRP.

Applications are accepted by DoAg on a continual basis. Approximately \$1.15 million of FLRP funding remains available.

"This program is another component of our long-range plan to grow Connecticut farms," said Agriculture Commissioner Steven K. Reviczky.

The FLRP provides matching grants of up to \$20,000 for restoration activities that increase the state's farmland resource base for agriculture, with a priority placed on prime and important farmland soils, and on human and livestock food production.

Livestock, livestock feed, and livestock support production is also considered for funding, as are other agricultural uses based on land use, food production, and acreage to be restored.

Eligible applicants include full-time farmers, part-time farmers, nonprofit organizations, and municipalities. Activities eligible for funding under the FLRP include the following:

- Reclamation of grown-over pastures, meadows, and cropland, including the removal of invasive plants and hedge-row management
- Clearing and removal of trees, stumps, stones, and brush to create or restore agricultural use
- Installation of fencing to keep livestock in reclaimed pasture areas and/or out of riparian areas
- Installation of wildlife management fencing to protect crop fields on FLRP area(s)
- Restoration of water runoff and drainage of crop fields to improve cropland areas and restore water runoff patterns and water conservation

- Renovation of farm ponds including farm pond management/irrigation and irrigation wells incidental to the restored areas
- Replanting of vegetation on erosion prone land and along stream banks related to agricultural lands
- Restoration of shellfish beds or aquaculture ponds
- Enhancement of farm roads to access restoration areas

A conservation plan prepared by USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service or a farmland restoration plan prepared with assistance from the North Central Conservation District (NCCD) is required.

These plans are provided at no cost to the applicant and provide a better understanding of a farm's soil and water resources



Installation of deer fencing at Sub Edge Farm in Farmington, CT to protect a field recently brought into production with financial assistance provided by the DoAg Farmland Restoration Program.

Photo courtesy of Sub Edge Farm.

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while ensuring that restoration work is done in an environmentally responsible manner.

Steve Munno of Massaro Community Farm in Woodbridge said developing the conservation plan laid the groundwork for restoring the farm as a whole.

Massaro Community Farm has been awarded four FLRP grants since 2012, which have been used to remove invasive species, dead trees, stumps, and boulders from fields and other restoration activities. FLRP funds were also used to install 1,800 feet of deer-exclusion fencing, drill a new irrigation well, and install 1,400 feet of buried irrigation piping and above-ground hydrants.

Munno said reclaiming and restoring approximately eight acres of fields would not have been possible without the cost sharing opportunity provided by the FLRP.

“By increasing our acreage we have been able to expand our offerings to the community, and increase fresh produce donations to hunger relief organizations, while maintaining and improving both our crop rotation and soil health management,” said Munno.

Sub Edge Farm in Farmington received a FLRP grant in 2013 for removal of invasive species and installation of deer exclusion fencing on a five-acre field now used for vegetable production.

Sub Edge Farm was also awarded a 2015 FLRP grant for brush clearing, deer fencing, and installation of an irrigation system, which brought an additional five acres into vegetable production.

Rodger Phillips of Sub Edge Farm said the FLRP grant gave their farm a boost that allowed them to open-up land for food production which they might not have been able to afford otherwise.

“We did not have access to water on a 20-acre field on the farm and now, because of the FLRP, we do,” said Phillips.

Phillips said working with DoAg on the restoration project was also a benefit to the farm.

“Having some fresh eyes on the farm helped us make decisions for long-term planning that were very helpful,” said Phillips. “Kip Kolesinskas is a great asset and very knowledgeable about land use and farm planning. His consultations really helped us out.”

The Jones Family Farms used FLRP grants to add more than 10 acres for fruit and vegetable production to their farm, clearing trees, stumps, and stones from a field and constructing stone-lined waterways to carry water across and down slopes for expansion of the farm’s vineyard. The farm also used FLRP funds for tree stump and stone removal in a separate field that is now used for vegetable crop production.

“These grants help reestablish the utility of our state’s most productive prime and important agricultural lands, while providing farmers an opportunity to grow their businesses through increased production,” said Commissioner Reviczky. “The program provides both short-term and long-term benefits to Connecticut’s farm families and to the state’s economy, which, according to the University of Connecticut, gains two dollars in additional activity for every dollar in agricultural sales.”

For more information about the FLRP call 860-713-2511, email Lance Shannon at lance.shannon@ct.gov, or visit www.CTGrown.gov/grants.

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FOOD EXPORT USA INTERNSHIP

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture is pleased to announce it is accepting applications for a part-time intern. The agency is a member of Food Export USA (FEUSA), which works with producers of Connecticut food and agricultural products to expand their markets overseas. FEUSA will contract directly with the intern to promote educational activities, events, and other opportunities sponsored by FEUSA that assist Connecticut food companies with international exporting.

The internship will begin in September 2018 and run through the fall semester. Interested applicants can visit www.CTGrown.gov until May 31, 2018, for a complete job description and application instructions.

USDA LOAN PROGRAMS ACTIVE IN 2017

In 2017, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's, Farm Service Agency (FSA) experienced another year of high activity in its farm loan programs.

According to the FSA, farmers across the country accessed nearly \$6 billion in new credit, either directly or guaranteed through commercial lenders in 2017. Overall, the FSA provides assistance to more than 120,000 family farmers through loans totaling just over \$25 billion.

"FSA loan funds have been in high demand the last few years," said Dr. Robert Johansson, Acting Deputy Under Secretary for the Farm Production and Conservation mission area.

FSA provides a variety of loan assistance, including direct and guaranteed farm ownership loans.

"Loan guarantee programs provided by the FSA offer an important tool for farmers to work with lenders," said Bill Lipinski, CEO of Farm Credit East. "FSA loan guarantees are vital to provide time for necessary adjustments to be made on the farm."

Over the years, the FSA loan guarantee program has helped family farms obtain financing for both seasonal operating needs and farm ownership.

In 2017, more than 4,200 beginning farmers received direct farm ownership loans from FSA to make their first land purchase.

"Family farmers across America also come to us for credit when they face challenges to stay in business," said Johansson. "We're proud to support rural prosperity by providing credit to those who need it most."

THERE'S STILL TIME TO RESPOND TO THE 2017 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service needs a Census of Agriculture response from ALL the nation's producers. Farmers are encouraged to complete their census either online at www.agcounts.usda.gov or by mail as soon as possible. For more information visit www.agcensus.usda.gov. For assistance filling out the census call 888-424-7828.

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



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