



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE**

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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Ag Commissioner Andy Gipson Reminds Farmers of Federal Disaster Relief Assistance Following South Mississippi Tornadoes

JACKSON, Miss. – As many folks in south Mississippi continue to recover from the disastrous effects of last Wednesday’s tornadoes, Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson reminds all affected Mississippi farmers of the existing disaster relief programs that may be available through your local federal Farm Service Agency (FSA).

“I encourage all Mississippi farmers, ranchers and landowners to assess and document your farm losses to this disaster and check with your local FSA county office as soon as possible,” said Commissioner Gipson. “Other disaster relief may also become available subject to a pending federal disaster declaration.”

Commissioner Gipson outlined several existing federal FSA programs producers should make note of as they assess damage:

- 1) Producers with Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)** coverage should report losses to their FSA office within 72 hours of discovering damage. Producers with Federal Crop Insurance should report losses to their crop insurance agent.
- 2) Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)** – provides assistance to repair and restore farmland affected by natural disasters. Covered practices (up to 75% cost share):
 - Removing debris from farmland.
 - Grading, shaping, or leveling land.
 - Restoring permanent fences.
 - Restoring conservation structures.
- 3) Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP)** – helps owners of non-industrial private forests to restore forest health damaged by natural disasters. The local FSA County Committee implements EFRP for all disasters with the exceptions of drought and insect infestations. In the case of drought or an insect infestation, the national FSA office authorizes EFRP implementation, up to 75% cost share. Residential sites are not eligible for EFRP.

- 4) **Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish (ELAP)** – offers financial aid to producers who suffer losses from specific adverse conditions not covered by other USDA disaster assistance programs. This includes losses due to disease, certain adverse weather events, and other qualifying conditions affecting livestock, honeybees and farm-raised fish. Eligible applicants include producers of livestock, honeybees and farm-raised fish who have suffered losses due to disease, adverse weather or other qualifying conditions. Covered losses:
- Livestock losses due to eligible disease.
 - Certain adverse weather.
 - Feed and water shortages.
 - Honeybee colony, hive, and feed losses due to colony collapse disorder, eligible adverse weather, and other conditions.
 - Farm-raised fish death losses due to eligible disease, adverse weather, and other qualifying conditions.
- 5) **Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)** – provides benefits to livestock producers for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by adverse weather or by attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the Federal Government. LIP payments are equal to 75% of the average fair market value of the livestock. Poultry and swine are the only eligible livestock for which contract growers can be eligible under LIP.
- 6) **Tree Assistance Program (TAP)** – provides financial assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines damaged by natural disasters. Eligible trees, bushes and vines are those from which an annual crop is produced for commercial purposes. Nursery trees include ornamental, fruit, nut and Christmas trees produced for commercial sale. Trees used for pulp or timber are not eligible for TAP assistance.

Commissioner Gipson encourages all producers to visit their local county FSA office and review the USDA's online Disaster Relief information and tools at <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/.../disaster-assistance-programs>.

Commissioner Gipson closed by stating, “We appreciate our strong partnership with the Trump Administration’s USDA, Ag Secretary Brooke Rollins and our local Mississippi Farm Service Agency State Director Chris McDonald. Working together, we will get through this awful weather event, and we will overcome these most recent challenges facing our farmers.”

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