

**For Immediate Release**

October 17, 2017

Contact: Edwin Almodovar, NRCS Caribbean Area Director

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Email: Edwin.Almodovar@pr.usda.gov**USDA Disaster Assistance Hotline for Hurricane Maria-Impacted Producers**Disaster assistance hotline for producers impacted by Hurricane Maria: **787-303-0341**Línea directa de asistencia ante desastres para productores afectados por el huracán María: **787-303-0341**

On September 6th, Hurricane Irma tore through the British and U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, causing catastrophic destruction. The strongest Atlantic Ocean hurricane ever measured, the Category 5 storm brought 185 mph winds that wreaked havoc and devastation to once idyllic St. John, St. Thomas and the British Virgin Islands.

Less than 2 weeks later - September 19th - 20th, Hurricane Maria - another intense Category 5 hurricane - brought cataclysmic destruction and devastation to St. Croix and Puerto Rico. Puerto Ricans and Crucians who emptied store shelves and larders in our rush to aid our brothers and sisters in Irma-impacted St. John, St. Thomas and the BVI are now suffering from a severe lack of resources.

Our USDA family in the Caribbean Area was impacted like everyone else, but we are working to help our fellow citizens, farmers, and businesses that have been hard hit by these disasters. We encourage all producers who have been impacted by these hurricanes to call our **USDA Disaster Assistance Hotline at 787-303-0341**.

Currently, all **NRCS Caribbean Area Field Offices** are open except for Arecibo and Corozal, so please come in and visit. However, only the **Caguas Field Office** and the **State Office** have communications (phone and internet).

Disaster Assistance:

- Disaster assistance Hotline for producers impacted by Hurricane Maria: 787-303-0341 / Asistencia para desastres Línea directa para productores afectados por el huracán María: 787-303-0341
- **[DisasterAssistance.gov](#)** - the quickest way to register for Federal assistance!
- Download the **[FEMA mobile app](#)** for shelter information, disaster resources, weather alerts, and safety tips, in English and in Spanish. The app provides a customizable checklist of emergency supplies, maps of open shelters and recovery centers, disaster survival tips, and weather alerts from the National Weather Service. The app also enables users to receive push notifications reminding them to take important steps to prepare their homes and families for disasters.
- **[Ready.gov](#)** - Get information to be prepared before, during, and after a hurricane.
- **[FEMA Debris removal guidelines](#)**
- **[FEMA Guía para recogido de escombros](#)**



USDA Provides Support for Hurricane-Impacted Dairies in Puerto Rico

Release No. 0135.17

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 19, 2017 – In the wake of the 2017 hurricanes, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is providing emergency assistance to dairy operators in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. USDA is preparing for signup to begin Oct. 21, 2017.

“We’re dispatching additional USDA staff to the island, but we also continue to ramp up material assistance as well,” said Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue. “Dairy producers need help immediately, and the Trump Administration is providing it.”

Hurricanes Irma and Maria devastated Puerto Rico’s agriculture sector, including dairy operations. Secretary Perdue said the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) is providing up to \$12 million dollars to enable operators of Puerto Rico’s 253 licensed dairy operations to purchase feed for cattle. The special initiative, applicable only to Puerto Rico, is called the Dairy Assistance Program for Puerto Rico (DAP-PR). The program will be administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA), which has offices and staff on the island.

“Dairy operations face additional losses unless they have feed for their remaining cattle,” said Perdue. “This funding will enable them to get the help they need until the situation in Puerto Rico stabilizes.”

Under the provisions of today’s announcement, dairy operators can apply to FSA to receive vouchers to purchase an estimated one-month supply of feed. The amount of the voucher is calculated based on 100 percent of estimated feed costs per cow for 30 days. There are an estimated 94,000 dairy cows on the island.

The CCC Charter Act includes authority for the corporation to make available materials and facilities required in connection with the production and marketing of agricultural commodities (except tobacco). The DAP-PR is a one-time initiative, designed to quickly provide disaster relief to assist in the production and marketing of dairy in Puerto Rico.

FSA will issue vouchers to licensed dairy applicants who may exchange the vouchers for feed at local dealers. If funding remains available at the end of the application period, FSA may provide assistance for additional feed or fuel purchases to further support these dairy operations. All applications must be received no later than Dec. 1, 2017.

For more information about how to apply, call the USDA Puerto Rico disaster assistance hotline for agricultural producers at 1-787-303-0341, visit your local FSA office, or go to www.fsa.usda.gov.