



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Usda Designates New York Counties as Ag Disaster Areas

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In response to Senator Young's call for the Federal Government to declare several upstate counties as disaster areas due to hail, high winds and excessive rain that occurred May 20, 2008 through June 13, 2008, the State Executive Director for USDA's Farm Service Agency in New York has announced that the USDA has designated Livingston, Orange, Oswego, Rockland and Wayne Counties in New York Ag-disaster areas.

Also named in the declaration because they are contiguous are Allegany, Cayuga, Dutchess, Genesee, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Monroe, Oneida, Onondaga, Ontario, Putnam, Seneca, Steuben, Sullivan, Ulster, Westchester, and Wyoming Counties.

All counties listed above were designated natural disaster areas on August 11, 2008, making all qualified farm operators in the designated areas eligible for low interest emergency (EM) loans from USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), provided eligibility requirements are met. Farmers in eligible counties have until April 13, 2009 to apply

for loans to help cover part of their actual losses. FSA will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability.

Following the storm, Senator Young toured farms throughout Chautauqua County to inspect the damage and begin to lay the groundwork for a course of action.

Senator Young organized 13 state senators co-sign a letter she penned to the Secretary of Agriculture to ask for his help. These senators represent regions around the state that also were storm damaged.

On June 16, 2008, hail and wind storms swept through New York State, from the farthest western reaches of Chautauqua and Erie Counties to the lower Hudson Valley, leaving behind sporadic but devastating damage for growers. Reports have reached our offices of grape growers whose vineyards appear to have been attacked by machine gun fire, of corn and soybeans literally shredded by golf ball size hail, and fresh vegetables, apples, peaches and cherries pockmarked by hail.

"New York farmers were looking forward to one of their best years with increasing demand for locally grown produce and forging new marketing opportunities on a daily basis," the Senator said. "Without immediate action, that stability was threatened by weather-induced losses that have affected grapes, vegetables, corn and soybeans. We needed to act quickly to ensure further economic damage wasn't done."

Interested farmers may contact their local USDA Service Centers for further information on eligibility requirements and application procedures for these and other programs. Additional information is also available online at:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=diap&topic=landing>.