

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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USDA DESIGNATES 13 CALIFORNIA COUNTIES NATURAL DISASTER AREAS
Decision Allows Farmers and Ranchers to Apply for USDA Assistance

WOODLAND, CA - May 17, 2007 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture has designated 13 California counties primary natural disaster areas:

San Benito County was designated a primary natural disaster area due to losses caused by extremely low temperatures and freezing conditions that occurred from January 12, 2007 through January 24, 2007. Also eligible because they are contiguous are Fresno, Merced, Monterey, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties.

San Joaquin County was designated a primary natural disaster area due to losses caused by the combined effects of drought and freezing temperatures that occurred during the period of October 15, 2006 and continuing. Also eligible because they are contiguous are Alameda, Amador, Calaveras, Contra Costa, Sacramento and Stanislaus counties.

Contra Costa and Fresno counties were designated primary natural disaster areas due to losses caused by the combined effects of drought, higher-than-normal temperatures and prolonged freezing conditions that occurred during the period of October 15, 2006 and continuing. Also eligible because they are contiguous are Alameda, Inyo, Kings, Madera, Mono, Monterey, Sacramento, San Benito, San Joaquin, Solano and Tulare counties.

Merced, Stanislaus and Tulare counties were designated primary natural disaster areas due to losses caused by the combined effects of drought and abnormally cold temperatures that occurred during the period of October 15, 2006 and continuing. Also eligible because they are contiguous are Alameda, Calaveras, Fresno, Inyo, Kern, Kings, Madera, Mariposa, San Benito, San Joaquin, Santa Clara and Tuolumne counties.

Kern, Kings, Lake, Mariposa, San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties were designated primary natural disaster areas due to losses caused by drought that occurred during the period of October 15, 2006 and continuing. Also eligible because they are contiguous are Colusa, Mendocino, Stanislaus, Fresno, Merced, Tulare, Glenn, Monterey, Tuolumne, Inyo, Napa, Ventura, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Yolo, Madera and Sonoma counties.

All counties listed above were designated natural disaster areas on May 9, 2007, making all qualified farm operators in the designated areas eligible for low interest emergency loans from USDA's Farm Service Agency, provided eligibility requirements are met. Farmers in eligible

counties have eight months from the date of the declaration 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. FSA has a variety of programs, in addition to the EM loan program, to help eligible farmers recover from adversity.

USDA has also made other programs available to assist farmers and ranchers, including Federal Crop Insurance and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program.

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: www.fsa.usda.gov.

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