September 25, 2020

Dear RI Farmer:

As I am sure you are aware RI is experiencing excessively dry conditions and the Governor has declared a “Drought Advisory”, which is the first of four levels of drought response. Additional information is at the Water Resources Board web page http://www.wrb.ri.gov/work_programs_drought.html which shows the drought level, a link to the Governor’s press release, information about the State’s Drought Plan (Water 2030) and has up to date monthly conditions reports and presentation materials from the National Weather Service and USGS. The Northeast Regional Climate Center also has additional information including the US Drought Monitor with clickable state maps and drought summaries at http://nedews.nrcc.cornell.edu/.

Pursuant to the Governor’s declaration of a Drought Advisory the Division of Agriculture is requesting you practice water conservation practices. We are aware farmers do as a matter of course but this request as one of the steps to be taken under State’s Drought Plan at the stage of “Drought Advisory”. We also direct you to the resources and programs of the USDA Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Services Agency (FSA) for drought assistance programming, including conservation practices and financial assistance.

USDA NRCS is monitoring the drought with partners and can assist farmers with implementing voluntary conservation practices that help alleviate the drought’s effects. NRCS has science-based solutions and technical experts on the ground and can provide technical and financial assistance to farmers to cope with the drought today and prepare for weather events in the future. Individual producers may be eligible for one or more of these programs. To learn more visit the NRCS (RI) website at https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/ri/home/.
USDA FSA has responded to the Declaration with enhanced funding available for producers through their Emergency Conservation, and Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Programs. There is also access to Forest Owners through their Emergency Forest Restoration and Livestock Forage Program. Individual producers may be eligible for one or many of these programs and conversation with the County Office staff will help. Their website is https://www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/Rhode-Island/ and the County Office can be reached at: (401) 828-3120 Option 2.

The Division of Agriculture will continue to provide updates in concert with USDA and farm organizations, and your efforts are appreciated.

Sincerely,

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