

APPLYING

Q. Can applicants apply any other way than through the online form, such as a Word document, or mail in an application?

A. The online form is the only way we can accept applications. For people without computers, we recommend visiting a local service provider or reaching out to your commodity group for assistance. Legislative offices might also be able to direct you to local resources.

Q. Are applicants required to use the Agricultural Loss Details & Budget Form (what if I don't have Excel)?

A. Yes, this is a required document that must be submitted for consideration under the Program. If applicants do not have Excel, they may reach out to Buy Local organizations, visit a local library, or use another available resource to submit this document as an uploaded attachment with the online application submission.

Q. Why can't edit the Agricultural Loss Details & Budget Form?

A. The Agricultural Loss Details & Budget Form is locked from editing beyond the user input fields, and MDAR requests that you do not edit the form in any way and use the information as provided.

Q. What if an applicant's crop isn't listed on the Agricultural Loss Details & Budget Form?

A. Complete the form as accurately and completely as possible. If you do not see the crop you are reporting a loss for, please enter the information under 'other' and use the justification field in the application to support your claim.

Q. What if my operation is different and my records, etc., don't match up perfectly with how the form requests the information?

A. Provide as much information as possible and we will use that information to make a determination. Use the justification field in the application to explain, and make it clear how you arrived at the estimated value of your losses.

Q. Is a Google Map with boundaries drawn acceptable for the required map?

A. Yes, a Google Map, a map from the Farm Service Agency (FSA) or from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), or any other type of map with the boundaries of the impacted acreage drawn is acceptable for the required map. If an applicant has multiple parcels or properties, please incorporate the multiple maps into one document for submission.

ELIGIBILITY

Q. Are all farming operation and crop types (i.e., dairy, tobacco, flower, aquaculture, cranberry, etc.) eligible to apply?

A. Yes, all operation types are eligible to apply as long as they suffered a loss during one of the outlined Natural Disaster dates as indicated in the RFR and are an agricultural operation as described under M.G.L. Chapter 128, Section 1A that sells products to wholesale or direct to consumer markets. The loss needs to be able to be quantified by the application deadline to be considered.

Q. This is my first year farming, so I don't have any previous years' records, am I eligible to apply?

A. Yes, you are eligible to apply. Please use the budget justification field to explain how you arrived at your estimated losses and associated lost revenue amounts.

Q. Why were these three extreme weather events chosen when there were other weather events that impacted farms?

A. Given the limited resources available we needed to set some parameters for determining what constituted a natural disaster. We chose the events that resulted in the most reported impacts for farmers.

Q. What if my operation was impacted from a weather event not included in the three listed?

A. If your operation was impacted from a weather event not specified in the RFR, your application will not be considered under the NDR Program. For the purposes of the NDR Program the Natural Disasters are indicated as February 3-5, 2023, May 17-18, 2023, and July 9-16, 2023.

Q. If losses occurred outside of the designated disaster dates, but were due to one of the disasters, are they eligible?

A. If a farmer reports that crops were lost as a result of the incident that occurred during the designated dates, those are eligible.

Q. What about organizations that have multiple farmers operating on their acreage?

A. Either the organization or the individual farmers can receive funding, but not both. We would prefer that the organization apply on behalf of all of the farmers. If we receive applications from both the organization and the individual farmers, we will consider only the organization's application.

Q. If I don't have a written lease agreement, am I eligible to apply?

A. Some type of written documentation is required that shows the legal relationship between the parties to ensure the correct entity/individual who is legally entitled to the payment receives it. This should include things like a description of the property, type of use(s) allowed, duration, and signatures of the parties involved, including the landowner.

CALCULATIONS

Q. Will you take organic, direct-market sales, etc. into account when determining prices?

A. Each applicant will report their estimated loss and build into those determinations the anticipated value of their crops based on their growing methods and market channels. One of the questions included in the application is how products are marketed. Use the justification field on the form to explain further and make clear how you arrived at the estimated value of your losses.

Q. How do produce operations who operate a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) report their losses?

A. Operations who operate with a CSA model should use the justification field on the form to explain their share prices and anticipated losses from their CSA. Applicants should still use the Agricultural Loss Details & Budget Form to report their crop losses. The program will not cover losses for crops not grown on the applying farm.

Q. How does an applicant apply for losses in yields that are unknown by the due date of the application?

A. As MDAR anticipates that we will not have enough funding to cover all of the losses experienced this year, we cannot fund potential or expected losses that are unknown by the application due date.

Q. The RFR states that an applicant must have suffered a minimum 15% loss, does the 15% threshold refer to the individual crop, or to the total farm planted acreage?

A. Total acreage of harvestable, marketable crops planted by the farm in 2023.

Q. How do I calculate my total acreage loss if I farm on land outside of Massachusetts?

A. Acreage outside of Massachusetts is not eligible for consideration under the NDR Program. Do not include this acreage in the calculations for the percentage of your total losses or for lost revenue associated with this acreage.

Q. How do I calculate the acreage if I only lost a percentage of the yield on some of my acres, but not the entire yield on any of my acreage?

A. Equate the loss yield over the entire acreage to a percentage of acreage lost and use this to complete the Agricultural Loss Details & Budget Form. For example, if you lost 50% of your strawberries on 10 acres, use 5 acres as the amount of acreage lost.

FUNDING PROCESS

Q. Will MDAR assure that funds will be available by the of the 2023 calendar year?

A. We will work to get funds out as quickly as possible but cannot make any guarantees. Applications that are incomplete or do not include the required documentation may contribute to delays in the funding process.

Q. Will the award amounts be taxable?

A. Applicants may receive a 1099-G for funding received under the NDR Program. MDAR cannot give any tax advice and applicants should reach out to a tax professional for questions regarding the implications of receiving this funding.

Q. How will MDAR distribute the funding?

A. Applicants who are receiving funding will be required to enter into a contract with the Department before receiving funding. This includes documentation such as a Standard Contract Form, a W-9, and an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) Form. More information about the required documentation is outlined in the RFR.