<u>Questions submitted and answers provided for the Natural Disaster Recovery II program</u>
September 1, 2026

[Program page: www.mass.gov/how-to/natural-disaster-recovery-ii-program-for-agriculture-ndrii-2023-2024](www.mass.gov/how-to/natural-disaster-recovery-ii-program-for-agriculture-ndrii-2023-2024)

Answers are in **bold**.

In the three questions below, does "all eligible crops" mean all eligible crops for which a farmer is claiming crop loss? Or does it mean all crops on a farm that could theoretically have been eligible for crop loss claims, including those for which no loss occurred? If it's the latter, then is it a safe assumption that the answers to these questions do not determine the 15% threshold, given that these numbers would include crops other than the crops that had losses?

- *What were the total sales of all eligible crops for the entire operation in the year prior to the reported loss? (Required)*
- *What were the anticipated (pre-loss) total sales of all eligible crops for the entire operation in the year of the reported loss? (Required)*
- *What were the actual (post-loss) total sales of all eligible crops for the entire operation in the year of the reported loss?*

"Eligible Crops" refers to crops eligible for the NDR2 program. If a farm had $100,000 in squash crops and $50,000 in livestock sales, the total Eligible Crops would be $100,000. Total loss across all crops must be at least 15% of all eligible crops that experienced a loss.

When are you required to check "yes" in response to the question -- *Could the same loss be claimed by another operation or* landowner? Does this need to be checked for all leased land, even if there was only one eligible producer farming at this site? The application allows space to list only one other operation or landowner – what should you do if there is more than one operation or landowner that could theoretically claim the same loss?

Applicants should check yes if any losses to be claimed in the application occurred on leased land. If there were multiple leases to report, information for additional landowners can be entered in the additional information field on the final page of the form.

How are leased farms without traditional leases handled? Many farmers operate under, annual agreements, informal arrangements or long-standing agreements without a formal lease. What documentation will MDAR accept as an "other binding agreement"? Would a landowner letter or affidavit confirming that the applicant operated the property in 2023/2024 be sufficient? Does the applicant need to currently lease the property, or only demonstrate legal control at the time the loss occurred?

> **Where possible, applicants should submit proof in writing of any arrangement that allowed them to raise crops on land they did not own on which they suffered a loss at the time of the loss. If no such documentation exists, they should explain the arrangement in the explanation fields available.**

How is a "site" defined for this application, and does it have a precise or flexible definition? For example, does a site need to be made up of a contiguous piece of land, or does a site need to have a single ownership or lease arrangement? If you have one contiguous parcel with losses that includes both owned and leased land, can/should this be a single site? And if you have more than five non-continuous parcels with losses, can you combine them into five or fewer sites?

> **A site is a contiguous piece of land. Applicants with more than five non-contiguous parcels should use the "Additional Loss Information" section to provide that information.**

The RFR suggests that *"rental costs for facilities rented in 2023-2024 due to loss of or damage to a structure"* are eligible for repayment, but it is unclear where to enter these costs in the application. Should these costs be added to the "Estimated Repair/Replacement Cost" total?

> **If an applicant selects "On-Farm Building" as an infrastructure loss the "Rental costs" field is available for entering this information.**

Is a cooperative, grower-owned distributor eligible for funding through this program? A business of this kind appears to meet the definition of an "agricultural business" in the RFR. The cooperative does not produce agricultural crops, but its member-owners do.

> **A cooperative is eligible, but if both the cooperative and the farmer member-owners were to apply for the same losses it would risk neither applicant receiving payment. The entity that suffered the economic loss should be the only applicant.**

There are several calculations that are going to be more difficult for diversified vegetable and fruit operations using multiple successions, intercropping, small plantings, or intensive bed systems.

- "Crop Losses: Enter information for each individual type of crop that suffered a loss. Total loss across all crops must be at least 15% of all crops that experienced a loss." …"Crop Type: Identify one type of crop lost. A separate form must be completed for each type of crop. Multiple forms allowed"
    - If a farmer suffered a loss due to flooding in a 2 acre field with 20 different vegetable crops in it (lettuce, potatoes, etc.), is that field treated as one 1 commodity type (vegetables) or does the farmer have to fill out 20 separate forms for each type of crop (lettuce, tomatoes, potatoes)?

  A crop loss form must be completed for each different type of crop lost. A form completed for "vegetables" will not be considered.

What date should farmers enter for prolonged weather events?

Each "Date of weather event" field on the form states: "If weather event occurred over multiple days, enter first day."

How should a Market Loss be calculated and documented when a weather event did not physically destroy the crop but prevented or reduced sales, for example, a farmers market closure, cancelled wholesale order, CSO closure, or forced sale into a lower-value market?

The loss amount should be based on the difference between the anticipated value of the crops, and the actual sale amount.

If a crop was eventually sold later, but at a reduced price or after incurring additional holding/storage costs, what portion constitutes the eligible loss?

The loss amount should be based on the difference between the anticipated value of the crops, and the actual sale amount.

Is tobacco an eligible crop?

Yes, as long the loss meets the eligibility criteria.

Are field crops that are harvested for grain to feed animals eligible?

No.

Can farms that have gone out of business after 2023 qualify? For example a peach orchard that went out of business partially because of the losses due to the freeze.

Yes, as long the loss meets the eligibility criteria.

Is damage to a farm's agricultural irrigation pond an eligible loss?

No.

Are all types of above-ground irrigation fixtures, supplies, and equipment generally eligible, aside for irrigation pumps? (e.g. layflat hose, pipes, sprinklers, reels, filters, fittings)

Yes, as long the loss meets the eligibility criteria.

Can "market loss" potentially include market disruptions caused by weather events such as the following:

- Repeated PYO field closures due to excessively wet weather for the duration of the PYO season that significantly reduced revenue compared to an average year.
- Unusually low customer turnout due to rain at every farmers' market during the season of a highly perishable crop, causing 2/3 of that crop to go unsold.

Yes, as long the loss meets the eligibility criteria.

Is loss affecting stored fluid milk eligible for funding as part of the "stored crops/value-added product" commodity category? Does it matter whether it is raw vs. pasteurized, or whether it is bulk vs. bottled?

Dairy products are not eligible for this program.

If an eligible producer was growing commercial nursery crops inside a greenhouse during a qualifying 2023 or 2024 extreme weather event, and the severity of that weather event overwhelmed the greenhouse's environmental controls—such as extreme cold exceeding the heating system's ability to maintain crop-survival temperatures—are the resulting nursery crop losses eligible as Crop Loss under NDR2?

Yes, as long the loss meets the eligibility criteria.

Are losses incurred in indoor production (e.g. mushrooms, hydroponics) an eligible crop loss type under this program?

Yes, as long the loss meets the eligibility criteria.

What types of losses are available to livestock producers? Although livestock, grazing crops and fodder are excluded from crop-loss compensation, the bare-ground section references livestock losses and emergency water for livestock. What constitutes an eligible “livestock loss” for purposes of qualifying for bare-ground practices?

Animals must have suffered a greater than 15% loss in value as a result of the damage for the bare ground practices to be eligible. Livestock farmers are eligible for infrastructure losses, within the terms explained in the RFR.

For the “Infrastructure Loss” section, the dropdown menu lists the following infrastructure types: 1) On-farm building, 2) Above-ground irrigation, 3) Plasticulture, 4) On-farm road/bridge/culvert, 5) Maple tubing/fittings/tanks, and 6) Other. However, the infrastructure definition in the RFR suggests that nothing beyond the first five infrastructure types are eligible. Are there any examples you can give of infrastructure that might fit into the “Other” category?

No.

The RFR notes that costs associated with “providing emergency water during drought for livestock or crops” are an eligible loss type in the Bare Ground Practices category. Can you say more about what expenses related to providing water to crops might qualify, and about what level of abnormally dry or drought conditions would be considered an extreme weather event? For example, in what circumstances could a farm request compensation for labor expenses related to setting up, moving, or operating irrigation? If a farm purchased new irrigation equipment during a drought, would that be an eligible expense?

Under this program, all claims must be associated with a loss. Mitigation or activities to prevent a loss are not eligible.

Can you request compensation for any labor time used to mitigate or respond to the impacts of extreme weather (e.g. securing row cover in preparation for wind events, irrigating strawberries to protect them from frost, or plowing in flooded fields)?

Under this program, all claims must be associated with a loss. Mitigation or activities to prevent a loss are not eligible.

For farms that process a significant portion of a crop into value-added product that they sell for a higher price -- like peeled/cut butternut, frozen blueberries, elderberry syrup, or flower arrangements, is it acceptable for the farm to include both fresh sales and value-added sales of the crop when calculating its expected per-acre value?

The value claimed should reflect the status of the product at the time of the loss. If a crop was lost in the field or post-harvest before processing it should be reported as a crop loss. If it was a value-added product that was damaged after processing,

it should be claimed as such. No items should be claimed twice as two separate losses.

For maple producers with reduced sap production due to drought and/or excessively warm spring temperatures, do such losses have to be reported in gallons of maple sap, or can these losses be reported in terms of reduced value-added product (e.g. maple syrup gallons).

Losses must be reported for the crop that was lost. If sap was lost prior to processing, it must be claimed as a sap loss. If finished syrup was lost it must be claimed as syrup.

Can you provide more detail about what kinds of documentation are sufficient? For example:

- The RFR says that applicants must document that irrigation equipment included in an application as a loss was used to irrigate a crop within 12 months of the weather event. Is it sufficient for the applicant to write something like this? -- “We have used drip irrigation in this field every year since approximately 2019, and that irrigation was damaged in this event as described elsewhere in this application.”
- The RFR says that applicants must provide documentation of any self-performed work, if applicable. Is it sufficient for the applicant to include a letter or spreadsheet listing the number of hours spent on each task that was required to implement necessary infrastructure repair, infrastructure reconstruction, and/or bare-ground practices?
- Are farmers required to provide documentation for expected per-acre value figures on a crop-by-crop basis? For example, for a farm that prices and markets multiple crops together (such as through a CSA), is it sufficient to include pricing and/or sales documentation that combines multiple crops? And is it sufficient for a farm to provide sales records broken down by category but not by crop?

Applicants should submit as much documentation as possible to justify their claims. The list found in the RFR provides examples of acceptable documentation, but other materials may be submitted as appropriate. Written explanations to supplement documents are welcome. If a single document represents justification for multiple reported crops that were lost, that should be noted in the explanation.

For a farm that did not produce an affected crop in the year before the loss, what are acceptable ways for them to calculate the expected per-acre, per-unit, or per-plant value of this crop, given that the application instructs them to enter the enter the value *"based on value for year prior to reported weather event."* For example, can they calculate this based on the per-acre, per-unit, or per-plant value for a year after the reported weather event? Or can they use regional yield and pricing data from other resources such as NASS, the New England Vegetable Management Guide, or other local farms?

Farmers should use the most appropriate method available to calculate what their expected per-acre, -unit, or -plant values were, and explain their method in the explanatory fields.

If a farm lost their peach crop in 2023 and it was going to be their first year harvesting the trees, would subsequent years' sales records be sufficient proof of economic loss?

Farmers should use the most appropriate method available to calculate what their expected per-acre, -unit, or -plant values were, and explain their method in the explanatory fields.

Are sales records through a point-of-sale system eligible documentation?

Yes.

For the "Future Economic Losses" section, farmers are asked to enter the "number of eligible plants managed (all types)" in the year of the loss. However, this will be a very challenging number to estimate for farmers with crops like strawberries that may spread and multiply after the initial planting. Can such farmers report the total number of plants at the time of planting?

Farmers should enter the best information they have available concerning the number of plants that are managed and lost.

If a farmer repaired a greenhouse, road, irrigation system or other eligible infrastructure themselves rather than hiring a contractor, can their labor and use of farm equipment be included in the eligible loss? If yes, how should labor and equipment use be valued and documented?

Self-labor should be reported as number of hours spent on a project.

Can you share any more information about what MDAR's process will be for comparing some claimed values with federal commodity prices when setting payment levels? Does MDAR anticipate being able to compensate farmers for per-acre crop values that are greater than national commodity prices, given that farm input costs and prices are higher in Massachusetts than the national average?

MDAR will use data that is appropriate for valuing Massachusetts crops.

Can you share more about the evaluation MDAR will take regarding previous compensations for the same disaster. This will be helpful in advising farmers as they decide whether applying to NDRII is worth their time.

Applicants should report the value of their entire eligible losses and indicate any payments they have already received to mitigate those losses. Reviewers will verify prior payments from public sector sources.

Can losses that were submitted from first disaster payment program be resubmitted for current payment program?

Any weather-related losses incurred in 2023 and 2024 may be eligible. If you received funding from the 2023 NDR program there is a place on the form to indicate the amount and that amount will be deducted from any payments through NDRII.

If an applicant received grant funds from MDAR that covered the cost of an eligible loss, such as damage to a barn, would the amount of that grant be deducted from the eligible claim?

Yes.

Does the “Prior Payments” section apply only to federal or state disaster assistance programs, as opposed to including private/community assistance (e.g. family, crowdfunded, or foundation support or in-kind donations of product or labor)?

Prior payments include verifiable payments from public sector sources.

Is the payment a percentage of the total loss? How much can farmers expect to recoup through this program?

Final payment amounts will depend upon the total amount claimed in eligible applications. No applicants will receive more than 95% of their reported loss.

The RFR does not appear to reference the maximum of 95% loss coverage through government payments, but the video does. Should producers assume the video is accurate?

FSA requires that payments through this program be capped at 95% loss coverage.

Is the payment a percentage of the total loss? How much can farmers expect to recoup through this program?

Final payment amounts will depend upon the total amount claimed in eligible applications. No applicants will receive more than 95% of their total reported loss.

Are there any specific requirements for how NDR2 funds are used? And, related:

- Regarding the question -- *"Funds Use: Describe how funds received from this program will be used"* -- Will this answer be used in any way to determine farmers' payment level or eligibility for funding, or will it only be used to understand program impacts?
- Regarding Section 6B -- Will it be mandatory for any farmers to provide documentation or certification describing how Program funds were used after receiving the payments?

The question regarding fund use is for information gathering purposes only. Farmers awarded payments will not have reporting requirements following payment.