

Addressing the Severe Weather Events of 2026



Maryland farmers have experienced the effects of extreme weather firsthand in 2026. Following a harsh winter, drought conditions have persisted across much of the state. On April 21, temperatures plunged into the low 20s after several weeks of warm weather, resulting in a catastrophic freeze that severely damaged crops statewide. Combined with ongoing drought conditions, the freeze has caused significant losses for Maryland producers, particularly specialty crop growers.

If you have been impacted by the severe freeze event of late April 2026, you are encouraged to contact your [local Farm Service Agency office](#).

How We're Helping

The U.S. Department of Agriculture [issued a Secretarial Disaster Declaration](#) for primary and contiguous Maryland counties on June 15, 2026.

On June 26, 2026, USDA issued a [Secretarial Disaster Declaration](#) for the Commonwealth of Virginia, which included five contiguous Maryland counties. The following counties are now eligible for assistance:

Primary Counties:

- Baltimore
- Caroline
- Carroll
- Cecil
- Dorchester
- Frederick
- Howard
- Montgomery
- Queen Anne's
- Somerset
- Washington
- Wicomico

Contiguous Counties:

- Allegany
- Anne Arundel
- Charles
- Harford
- Kent
- Prince George's
- Talbot
- Worcester

On Wednesday, May 27, Governor Wes Moore [formally requested a Secretarial Disaster Declaration from the U.S. Department of Agriculture](#). The designation makes a range of federal assistance programs available to impacted producers, including:

- [Emergency Credit Access](#): The Farm Service Agency is able to make low-interest emergency loans available to cover production costs, replace essential equipment or refinance certain debts while revenue from the current year's harvest is absent.
- [Specialized Crop Recovery](#): Orchards and vineyards can access cost-share assistance to help replant or rehabilitate trees through the Tree Assistance Program.
- [Regulatory Flexibility](#): A formal designation can allow for flexibility in existing USDA programs, allowing farmers to be eligible for ad hoc disaster programs passed by Congress.

On Friday, May 29, [Governor Wes Moore directed](#) the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the [Maryland Department of the Environment](#) (MDE) to implement a coordinated and urgent response to address the significant crisis facing producers as a result of the late April freeze and ongoing drought.

The "[Directive on State Response to Impact of Late Spring Frost on Crops](#)" directs the following:

MDA shall:

- Waive the 51% Maryland crop or 20-acre minimum requirement for Class 4 Limited Wineries as authorized under the Alcoholic Beverages and Cannabis Article §2-206;
- Facilitate distribution of all available federal disaster funds and programming*;
- Develop an irrigation task force for agricultural producers;

- Develop a producer education and risk management task force to elevate existing Farm Service Agency and Risk Management Agency program;
- Instruct the Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) to consider modifications to enhance opportunities within their programs that support farmers and watermen impacted by the natural disaster incidents; and
- Encourage all Maryland institutions, organizations, food banks and consumers to purchase local products whenever possible to support our farms and value-added agricultural businesses.

MDE shall:

- Prioritize and streamline applications for water appropriate permits for agricultural production.

The [Governor's Intergovernmental Commission on Agriculture](#) shall:

- Assess how state and local regulatory agencies can better support affected agricultural sectors.

**The Maryland Department of Agriculture will request recovery assistance from USDA in the form of a block grant agreement to help producers recover from the April 2026 freeze event and ongoing drought.*

Additional Resources

- **NEW!** The Internal Revenue Service is extending tax relief to farmers who sold or exchanged livestock due to drought conditions. Find out more at:
[Extension of Replacement Period of Livestock Sold on Account of Drought](#)
- [USDA Disaster Assistance Recovery Tool](#)
- [USDA Disaster Assistance Programs at a Glance](#)

- [Maryland Farm Service Agency Office](#)
- [Tree Assistance Program \(Farm Service Agency\)](#)
- [MDA Information on Farm and Crop Insurance](#)
- [University of Maryland Extension Crop Insurance](#)
- [U.S. Drought Monitor](#)