

Governor Quinn Expands Drought Relief Effort

Written by Leslie Wertheimer
Monday, 16 July 2012 14:32

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Offers Ongoing Assistance to Affected Farmers and Communities

MT. VERNON, IL – July 16, 2012. Governor Pat Quinn today announced state assistance available to farmers and residents in drought impacted areas after meeting with farmers and viewing crop damage resulting from persistent, widespread drought conditions in Southern Illinois. Joined by Illinois Department of Agriculture Acting Director Bob Flider, Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Acting Director David Vaught and Department of Natural Resources Director Marc Miller, the governor called on the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to grant a disaster designation to a total of 33 Illinois counties, up from the 26 determined eligible for emergency support by the USDA last week.

Through a request to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, Governor Quinn requested that seven additional counties (Bond, Champaign, Greene, Monroe, Morgan, Stephenson and Washington) be declared eligible for emergency USDA support. He also announced a set of four agricultural aid programs offered by the Illinois Finance Authority.

“Agriculture is the backbone of Illinois’ economy, and as we’ve seen today, severe drought conditions are devastating crop production throughout the state,” Governor Quinn said. “As this drought continues, we are committed to using all the tools we have to help impacted farmers and communities bounce back.”

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Governor Quinn's letter to Secretary Vilsack notes that the seven additional counties have demonstrated crop reduction losses of 30 percent or more, which is the USDA threshold for triggering disaster relief. In addition, Governor Quinn called for the federal Congress to finish its work on the Farm Bill which includes assistance for crops and livestock that will help Illinois farmers.

"We will continue to identify every resource possible for producers who have been impacted by this drought," IDOA Acting Director Bob Flider said. "We are working closely with the agricultural community of Illinois and the USDA to continually evaluate conditions throughout the state."

Farmers in USDA disaster-designated areas can seek assistance from the Farm Service Agency (FSA), including emergency loans. Those in eligible counties have eight months from the date of the declaration to apply for assistance.

In addition to the USDA relief, Governor Quinn announced that the Illinois Finance Authority (IFA) will partner with local banks to activate four programs statewide to accelerate support to eligible farmers:

- **Agricultural Restructuring Debt Guarantee Program** provides an 85 percent guarantee with a term up to 30 years on a local bank loan up to \$500,000 used to consolidate existing debt and spread payments out over a longer period
- **Working Capital Guarantee Program** provides an 85 percent guarantee with a commitment up to three years on a local bank loan up to \$250,000 used for input costs related to planting and raising agricultural crops
- **Agricultural Loan Participation Program** provides IFA purchase of up to \$500,000 of a

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customer's bank loan to reduce interest rate with a loan term up to 10 years

· **Rural Development Loan Program** provides loans under a relending program from the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Development from \$50,000 to \$250,000 for economic development financing in communities with less than 25,000 population

The Governor also launched Drought.Illinois.gov, a web repository for information on drought conditions, disaster declarations and related information. The website includes quick access to resources like the Department of Agriculture's "Illinois Hay Directory" which can help Illinois producers locate hay to feed their livestock. Many pastures have been badly damaged this year, making the Hay Directory especially important. Printed copies of the Hay Directory also are available by calling [\(217\) 782-4925](tel:2177824925).

Today's announcements build on the recommendations of the Governor's Drought Response Task Force, a group of state, federal and university officials called together last week to report on the conditions of the state's water resources. They will continue to gather, monitor and report on all local and statewide water issues. They will continue to offer recommendations and update Drought.Illinois.gov as weather conditions change.

The 26 counties in Illinois that have received Secretarial Disaster Designation include: Alexander, Clark, Clay, Crawford, Edwards, Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Johnson, Lawrence, Massac, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Randolph, Richland, Saline, Union, Wabash, Wayne, White and Williamson.

A combination of extremely hot and dry weather in Illinois made the first half of 2012 the sixth driest on record, according to the Illinois State Water Survey. Statewide rainfall averaged just 12.6 inches for the period of January through June, nearly seven inches below normal. Every month this year has had above normal temperatures and the statewide average of 52.8 degrees for the past sixth months is the warmest on record.

For more information, please visit Drought.Illinois.gov.

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About the Illinois Finance Authority

The Illinois Finance Authority provides expert, hands-on support to help businesses get the capital they need for growth. To support Illinois businesses and the State's economic development agenda, the IFA provides access to low-cost, non-conventional financing, through banks and other sources. IFA secures financing for farms, industries, businesses, local governments, hospitals and other non-profits. The agency is continually seeking new opportunities and invites developers, financiers and community partners to see how IFA can help. Go to www.il-fa.com to learn more.

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