

STATE OF MAINE

—
IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-TWO

—
S.P. 717 - L.D. 1998

**An Act To Establish a Fund for Farmers Adversely Affected by Drought
Conditions**

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 7 MRSA c. 8-A, sub-c. 4 is enacted to read:

SUBCHAPTER 4

FARMERS DROUGHT RELIEF GRANT PROGRAM

§220-A. Farmers Drought Relief Grant Program

1. Grant program established. The Farmers Drought Relief Grant Program, referred to in this section as "the program," is established in the department to assist farmers in the State to overcome the adverse effects of drought conditions by providing grants in accordance with this section.

2. Eligibility. A farmer in the State may apply for a grant under the program if the farmer needs to establish a source for irrigation water to alleviate the risk of crop losses due to drought. The source for irrigation water must be sustainable, environmentally sound and affordable.

3. Farmers Drought Relief Grant Program Fund. The Farmers Drought Relief Grant Program Fund is established as a nonlapsing fund to provide funding to achieve the purposes of the program. The fund consists of any funds received from private and public sources. The fund must be held separate and apart from all other money, funds and accounts. Any balance remaining in the fund at the end of any fiscal year must be carried forward to the next fiscal year.

4. Rules. The department shall adopt rules to implement the program. The rules must include grant eligibility requirements, grant application and award procedures and grant funding limits. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

Sec. 2. Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to examine ways to streamline permitting new sources of water for farmers. The Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources shall work with the Department of Environmental Protection and the Maine Land Use Planning Commission and other appropriate agencies to examine the permitting process for farmers seeking to secure permits for new sources of water for irrigation and to develop recommendations, including suggested legislation, to streamline the permitting process. No later than January 1, 2023, the department shall submit a report with findings and recommendations to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over agriculture, conservation and forestry matters. The joint standing committee may submit a bill to the First Regular Session of the 131st Legislature relating to the subject matter of the report.

Sec. 3. Transfer. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the State Controller shall transfer \$75,000 from the reserve for tax relief fund for Maine residents established within the Office of the Treasurer of State to the unappropriated surplus of the General Fund no later than June 30, 2023.

Sec. 4. Appropriations and allocations. The following appropriations and allocations are made.

**AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY, DEPARTMENT OF
Bureau of Agriculture 0393**

Initiative: Provides one-time funding for contractual services to complete rulemaking, coordinate with other state agencies on strategies to streamline the irrigation permitting process and report back on findings.

GENERAL FUND	2021-22	2022-23
All Other	\$0	\$75,000
GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$0	\$75,000

Farmers Drought Relief Grant Program Fund N947

Initiative: Provides allocations to establish the fund and to allow for acceptance of funding from private and public sources.

OTHER SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS	2021-22	2022-23
All Other	\$0	\$500
OTHER SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS TOTAL	\$0	\$500

**AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND
FORESTRY, DEPARTMENT OF
DEPARTMENT TOTALS**

	2021-22	2022-23
GENERAL FUND	\$0	\$75,000
OTHER SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS	\$0	\$500
DEPARTMENT TOTAL - ALL FUNDS	\$0	\$75,500