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Federal assistance available to help Massachusetts farmers weather drought this summer

AMHERST, Mass. – The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has announced \$377,000 in Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) funding to help Massachusetts farmers reduce the risk of drought in the 2004 growing season. AMA helps farmers adopt conservation practices and investment strategies that will reduce or mitigate risks to their agricultural enterprises.

Bay State farmers are encouraged to sign-up for AMA by May 15th. For more information, contact your local NRCS office or USDA Service Center, listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture, or on the web at <http://offices.usda.gov>. Additional information about NRCS programs in Massachusetts can be found at www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov.

In Massachusetts, cost-share is available to producers for drought mitigation. Program participants may develop or improve sources of irrigation water supply, construct new or reorganize irrigation delivery systems on existing cropland to mitigate the risk of drought. Incentive payments are available to encourage producers to adopt irrigation water management.

AMA, administered by NRCS, is a voluntary conservation program available in states where participation in the Federal Crop Insurance Program is historically low. Massachusetts is one of 15 states that will receive a total \$14 million in AMA funding this fiscal year.

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