

From: Governor's Press Office [Governor'sPressOffice@eog.myflorida.com]
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Gov. Scott Activates \$25 Million Citrus Emergency Loan Program to Aid Citrus Growers

SOUTHPORT, Fla. – Today, Governor Rick Scott activated a \$25 million Florida Citrus Emergency Loan Program to support citrus growers impacted by Hurricane Irma. The bridge loan program, managed by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), will provide interest-free loans to citrus growers that experienced physical or economic damage during the storm. The application period will begin next week and be open through November 30, 2017.

Governor Scott said, "Hurricane Irma was a massive storm that impacted communities across our state, causing hundreds of millions of dollars of losses for the Florida citrus industry. I am committed to working with our state and federal partners to help Florida's citrus industry and the nearly 76,000 jobs it supports. The Florida Citrus Emergency Loan Program will be a valuable resource for affected business owners. I've also spoken to Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam and United States Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue and we'll continue to partner to find more ways to help this vital industry recover."

Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Adam Putnam said, "The path Hurricane Irma took through Florida could not have been more lethal to Florida agriculture – especially our citrus industry. We're all committed to getting growers the help they need, as quickly as possible, to be able to rebuild. I thank Governor Scott for his leadership and for making financial assistance available for Florida's growers devastated by Hurricane Irma."

DEO will administer the Florida Citrus Emergency Loan Program in partnership with the Florida SBDC Network to provide cash flow to businesses damaged by a disaster. The interest-free loans will help bridge the gap between the time damage is incurred and when a business secures other financial resources, including payment of crop insurance claims or federal disaster recovery appropriations. Up to \$25 million has been allocated for the program.

DEO Executive Director Cissy Proctor said, "Florida's iconic citrus industry needs our support to recover. The \$25 Million Citrus Emergency Loan Program will help ensure the industry can rebound so businesses and their employees can get back to work quickly."

Mike Myhre, CEO of the Florida SBDC Network, said, "Florida's businesses, including citrus producers, are important to Florida's economy. This program provides much-needed capital that our citrus growers need to recover from Hurricane Irma."

Shannon Shepp, Executive Director of the Florida Department of Citrus, said, "Governor Scott has shown great interest in this hallmark and iconic industry in the State of Florida. There is no question of its economic impact on our state and its history and legacy. The Florida Citrus Industry is absolutely appreciative of this effort to help get growers back in the growing cycle."

Citrus growers who maintain a citrus grove in production in any of Florida's 67 counties affected by Hurricane Irma can apply for loans up to \$150,000. These interest-free loans are granted in terms of up to one year. To be eligible, a grower must have been established prior to September 4, 2017, and demonstrate economic injury or physical damage as a result of Hurricane Irma.

To complete an application by the Nov. 30, 2017, deadline, or for more information on the program, visit www.floridadisasterloan.org. For questions regarding the \$25 Million Citrus Emergency Loan Program, contact the Florida Small Business Development Center Network at 850-898-3489 or email Disaster@FloridaSBDC.org. The phone line will be answered during regular business hours; all voice mails and emails will be responded to within 24 hours.

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