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USDA ISSUES NEW AID TO RECIPIENTS FROM FLORIDA AND ACROSS RURAL AMERICA

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By: [Richard M. Blau](#), Regulated Products Section Chair

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced USDA is investing [\\$285 million in critical infrastructure to lower energy costs, expand access to clean energy for people across rural America, and combat climate change](#). USDA is making an additional \$300 million available under the **Rural Energy for America Program** (REAP), including \$250 million through the [Inflation Reduction Act](#), to spur further investment.

Background

In August, Congress passed the Biden-Harris Administration's legislative package known as the **Inflation Reduction Act** to reduce energy costs for families and create thousands of good-paying jobs for people across rural America. The Inflation Reduction Act represents the largest single investment in rural electrification since the passage of the Rural Electrification Act in 1936.

The Inflation Reduction Act provides funding to USDA Rural Development to help eligible entities purchase renewable energy and zero-emission systems and make energy-efficiency improvements that will significantly reduce energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions. For example, it provides:

- Up to \$1 billion for loans for renewable energy infrastructure; up to \$2.025 billion for the **Rural Energy for America Program** (REAP), with \$303 million set aside for underutilized technologies and technical assistance.
- Up to \$500 million in grants for infrastructure improvements to blend, store or distribute biofuels. This includes installing, retrofitting, or upgrading ethanol dispensers at retail stations and home heating oil distribution centers.
- Up to \$9.7 billion for loans, grants, loan modifications, and other financial assistance to support the purchase of renewable energy systems, zero-emission systems and carbon capture systems.

Specific Aid for Florida's Rural Communities

USDA is making 844 investments through the [Rural Energy for America Program](#). This program helps farmers, ag producers, and entrepreneurs purchase and install renewable energy systems and make energy efficiency improvements. It reflects the many ways USDA Rural Development helps agricultural producers and rural small businesses lower energy costs. These funds will help people living in 46 states.

Examples of aid to Floridians include:

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Ovipost Inc. - \$18,159

This Rural Development investment will be used to replace current lighting with LED lighting to save 38 percent of energy. Ovipost Inc. is located in LaBelle, Florida.

Williams Custom Cutting LLC - \$13,975

This Rural Development investment will be used to purchase and install a 14-kilowatt (kW) solar array. Williams Custom Cutting LLC is a family-owned meat processing facility. This project will realize \$3,250 per year in savings and will replace 25,200-kilowatt hours (kWh) (40 percent) per year, which is enough energy to power two homes.. Williams Custom Cutting is located in Bradenton, Florida.

Amavida Coffee And Trading Company - \$31,747

This Rural Development investment will be used to install 3,230 square feet of 70.55 kilowatts (kW) direct current photovoltaic (PV) solar panels to generate renewable energy for the small business. This will offset the energy usage of the coffee roasting facility. Expected annual energy generation is 95,373 kilowatt hours (kWh). This will power the equivalent of nine homes. Amavida Coffee Roasters' Roastery & Premier Barista Training Campus is located in Santa Rosa, Florida.

TCVM Ltd Co - \$94,500

This Rural Development investment will be used to purchase and install a 200 kilowatt (kW) solar array. This project will generate 342,950-kilowatt hours (kWh) per year, which is enough electricity to power 30 homes. TCVM Ltd Company is located in Reddick, Florida.

Central State Aggregates LLC - \$500,000

This Rural Development investment will be used to purchase and install a one megawatt (MW) solar array. This project will realize 294,717-kilowatt hours (kWh) per year, which is enough electricity to power 27 homes. Central State Aggregates LLC is located in Zephyrhills, Florida.

Wish Farms Cooling and Packing LLC - \$66,565

This Rural Development investment will be used to assist Wish Farms Cooling and Packing LLC with their berry produce operation. Project funds will be used for the purchase and installation of an 842-kilowatt (kW) solar array. This project will realize \$137,386 per year in savings and generate 1,248,961 kilowatt hours (kWh) per year, which is enough electricity to power 115 homes. Wish Farms Cooling and Packing is based in Plant City, Florida.

Plants In Design Inc. - \$121,188

This Rural Development investment will be used to assist with a family-owned brewery. Project funds will be used to purchase and install a 507 kilowatt (kW) solar array. This project will realize

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\$340,050 per year in savings and will replace 283,754-kilowatt hours (kWh) (92 percent) per year, which is enough electricity to power 26 homes. Plants in Design Inc. is based in Miami, Florida.

Damascus Peanut Company - \$111,378

This Rural Development investment will be used to purchase and install a 307.8 kilowatt (kW) solar array that will be ground-mounted. This project will replace 476,000-kilowatt hours (kWh) per year, which is enough electricity to power 43 homes. The Damascus Peanut Company will be the owner and operator of this project. The Damascus Peanut Company has operations in Madison, Florida.

The Laser Investment Group LLC - \$246,551

This Rural Development investment will be used to assist a rural small business in developing a renewable energy system. The Laser Investment Group is a locally owned company that leases commercial property. Project funds will be used to purchase and install a 709 kilowatt (kW) solar array that will be roof mounted. This project will replace 985,542-kilowatt hours (kWh) per year, which is enough electricity to power 90 homes. The Laser Investment Group is based in Gainesville, Florida.

USDA also announced today that it would make \$300 million available under the [Rural Energy for America Program](#) to expand renewable energy and support energy-efficiency projects for people living in rural America. This funding includes \$250 million provided by the Biden-Harris Administration's historic legislative package, the [Inflation Reduction Act](#). The deadline to apply for grants is March 31, 2023. Applications for technical assistance grants are due no later than January 31, 2023. Applications for loan guarantees are accepted year-round.

For more information about future grant opportunities, visit the USDA's REAP Website at: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/energy-programs/rural-energy-america-program-renewable-energy-systems-energy-efficiency-improvement-guaranteed-loans>, or contact GrayRobinson's [Nationwide Food Law Group](#) via telephone at (866) 382-5132 or via email at foodlaw@gray-robinson.com.



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Richard M. Blau leads the GrayRobinson Nationwide Alcohol Industry Team, focusing on the laws that govern the production, importation, marketing, distribution, and sale of alcoholic beverages throughout America. Richard works with all levels of the alcohol industry's "three-tier system," as well as

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providers who are not licensees. He has represented international alcohol beverage importers and domestic manufacturers, statewide wholesaler trade groups and regional distributors, and retailers (including multistate on- and off-premises chains). Richard has achieved numerous peer-related accolades for his legal work, including **Chambers and Partners** - Nationally ranked as "Band 1" for Alcohol Beverage Law & Food Law; **Best Lawyers in America** - Nationally listed for Food and Beverage Law.