

## Tree Assistance Program

The Tree Assistance Program (TAP) provides financial assistance to qualified growers for replanting or rehabilitating eligible trees, bushes, and vines, including winegrapes, that are damaged by a natural disaster.

The TAP is administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) of the US Department of Agriculture. It is a cost reimbursement program. Payments are calculated based on actual costs to replace or rehabilitate lost or damaged trees, bushes, or vines. The first 18% of losses are not covered under this program. Replacement or rehabilitation of the trees, bushes, or vines must be completed within 12 months of the date that a TAP application is approved; payments will not be made until the replacement or rehabilitation is completed.

### **What types of trees, vines and bushes are eligible under TAP?**

Trees, vines, and bushes that are used for producing an annual commercial crop are eligible for disaster assistance under TAP. Nursery trees including ornamental, fruit, nut, and Christmas trees produced for commercial sale are also eligible for TAP assistance.

### **What kind of damage is eligible for TAP assistance?**

To be eligible trees, vines, or bushes must have sustained more than a 15% mortality loss due to natural disasters including plant disease, insect infestation, drought, fire, freeze, flood, earthquake, or lightning. The mortality loss is based on each eligible disaster event, or for a time period determined by the FSA for infection by a plant disease. Losses must be unpreventable through reasonable measures, and they must be visible and obvious to an FSA official. If the loss is not visible, then other loss evidence may be provided to FSA.

### **What winegrape diseases are eligible for TAP assistance?**

Plant diseases that have the potential to kill the vines or make the fruit not viable for commercial sale may be considered for disaster assistance under the TAP. Although losses for most other disasters are considered for an annual period, FSA may allow disease incubation period of two, three, or even five years for plant disease loss to exceed FSA's normal loss threshold of 3%. FSA may require a pathology report from a recognized agricultural laboratory such as WSU to substantiate the presence of a disease. FSA makes its determinations on eligible diseases on a state-by-state basis. Although some diseases in California vineyards are eligible for coverage under TAP, there are currently no eligible diseases for Washington winegrapes.

### **Is smoke taint from wildfires covered by TAP?**

Vines that are destroyed by wildfire are eligible for disaster assistance under TAP. However, grapes affected by smoke taint are not eligible for TAP assistance. Losses due to smoke taint would be covered under crop insurance.

### **What type of freeze damage to winegrapes is eligible for TAP assistance?**

If vines and roots are killed by freeze damage, then they are eligible for disaster assistance under



the TAP. However, crop loss due to bud or fruit freeze damage that does not result in death of the entire vine, including roots, is not eligible for TAP assistance. These crop losses would be covered by crop insurance.

### **What are the eligibility requirements for TAP assistance?**

Growers must have owned the eligible trees, bushes, or vines at the time when the disaster occurred. Growers are not required to own the land on which the trees, bushes, or vines are planted. Growers are not eligible for TAP assistance if their average Adjusted Gross Income is greater than \$900,000.

### **Are there acreage limitations for TAP assistance?**

For losses that occurred before December 31, 2016, a grower can receive payments for losses on up to 500 acres. For losses that occur after December 31, 2016, the acreage limitation has been increased to 1,000 acres.

### **How are TAP payments calculated?**

The TAP payment for replacement, replanting, or rehabilitation of damaged trees, bushes, or vines is the lesser of the following:

- 65% of actual cost of replanting, in excess of 18 percent mortality; or
- 50% of actual cost of rehabilitation, in excess of 18 percent mortality; or
- The maximum eligible amount established for the practice by FSA.

### **Tips for Applying for TAP assistance:**

- 1) Read the TAP information available on USDA's website at: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/disaster-assistance-program/tree-assistance-program/index>
- 2) Schedule a meeting with your local FSA office to discuss TAP eligibility and requirements **BEFORE** you remove dead vines. <https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>
- 3) Note that you must submit your TAP application within 90 calendar days of the disaster event or within 90 days of the date when the loss is apparent to the grower.
- 4) Additional information is available at <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov>

### **What is Winegrowers doing for you?**

Winegrowers is working with FSA on TAP eligibility for Washington vineyards affected by phylloxera. Additionally, Winegrowers is working to make TAP more accessible to specialty crop growers. Winegrowers will continue to monitor future developments on TAP and provide information to its members.

February 6, 2020

