

This is a printer friendly version of an article from GoUpstate.com

To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

---

Article published Jun 29, 2007

## Disaster aid coming to area farmers

By **JASON SPENCER**, [jason.spencer@shj.com](mailto:jason.spencer@shj.com)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has named 41 of 46 South Carolina counties - including Cherokee, Greenville and Spartanburg - disaster areas because of the amount of crops lost during an early-April freeze, Rep. Bob Inglis' office announced Thursday.

Such a designation means farmers who had crop insurance can apply for disaster payments to offset the cost of lost crops, and makes them eligible for up to \$500,000 in low-interest loans to cover production or physical losses.

"Many people will think of that as some sort of subsidy, but it's really more of a supplement to the crop insurance. And it needs to be there - real bad - this year, especially," said Henry Gramling of Gramling Farms. "Because the insurance is not adequately reimbursing the farmer for the crop that he lost."

Already, more than \$23 million is expected to go to farmers in this state insurance taken out on crops and subsidized by tax dollars. But the farmers say that isn't enough, and the disaster payments they soon will be able to apply for are desperately needed.

No estimate was available Thursday of how much money in disaster payments South Carolina farmers can expect to see. Nationally, the money - more than \$1.5 billion - was approved by Congress in May as part of a war funding bill.

Those dollars also would cover payments for crops damaged during blizzards and wildfires across the country since 2005.

"We don't know any details yet," said Bruce Johnson, who lost his entire peach crop this year.

"When the Farm Service Agency gets the details, the application dates, they will send out newsletters and let everyone know. But any help is welcome, and any help is appreciated."

Inglis has held several meetings with farmers recently, including one in May to discuss immigration, insurance and crop damage. More than 90 percent of the Upstate peach crop was lost in April, his office reported.

"The disaster designation won't bring back the peaches that were frozen in April, but it may help

some growers stay in business for next year's crop," Inglis said in a statement released Thursday. "Helping with this freeze is the least we can do for the farmers who take significant risks to meet our food and fiber needs."

Initially, the congressman's announcement focused solely on low-interest loans, which area farmers said would not be a huge help.

"These are loans. Potentially, there are some things that might not be covered under insurance. Or, perhaps, there was some structures or equipment that potentially needs to be replaced, or something along those lines," said Stevin Westcott, a spokesman for the USDA's Farm Service Agency.

But Inglis' office found out later in the day that the May spending bill would allow farmers here to apply for disaster payments that need not be repaid.

Beyond the peach industry, the April freeze also hurt apple, strawberry, corn, squash and other crops, Gramling said.

Help could not have come any sooner, he said.

"If we lose American agriculture, and we have to rely on third-world countries for our food supply ... we're going to be looking at some real scary things," Gramling said, alluding to contaminants found in pet food imported from other countries.

"Farming has become more expensive, more risky, and more important for homeland security than ever before."

---

• .