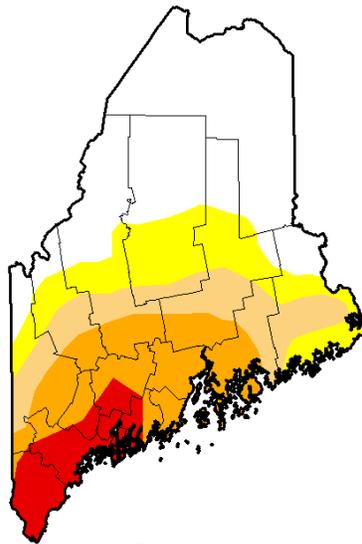


THE 2016 DROUGHT

by Katie Webb, Dairy Certification Specialist

Those of us growing crops or raising livestock in southern Maine felt the affects of drought this year to some degree, whether it was reduced seasonal crop quality and yields, insufficient quality and quantity of pasture for grazing and/or lack of water for livestock or irrigation. MOFGA Certification Services began receiving calls from certified organic producers as early as late June that they had not received any measurable rainfall for 6 or more weeks and/or that rainfall was 6 or more inches below normal. They also reported their struggles to manage the farm, and dairy and ruminant livestock producers were worried about their ability to graze in accordance with the minimum organic standards pasture requirements; 30% dry matter intake from pasture and 120 or more days of grazing on pasture. Staff at MCS and MOFGA's Ag Services began following the U.S. Drought Monitor weekly updates; <http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu> - click on the Northeast section to view the map of Maine.

U.S. Drought Monitor
Maine



As of 9/27/16

On September 7, 2016 the USDA Secretary of Agriculture declared York County a primary disaster area due to drought. With this declaration York County and the contiguous Counties of Cumberland and Oxford became eligible for crop relief funds.

However, severe drought conditions continued into the fall and on October 5, 2016 the USDA Secretary of Agriculture declared the Counties of Androscoggin, Cumberland, Kennebec, Lincoln, Oxford and Sagadahoc primary disaster areas due to drought. With this declaration the contiguous Counties of Franklin, Knox, Somerset and Waldo also became eligible for crop relief funds.

Links to Disaster Assistance Programs

USDA Drought Programs and Assistance:
http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentidonly=true&contentid=usda_drought_programs.html

Drought Risk Management Tool (University of Maine Cooperative Extension): <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/MEDACF/bulletins/16c3a87>

USDA Assistance for Maine Farmers Affected by Drought: <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/MEDACF/bulletins/16c3958>

Federal Economic Injury Disaster Loans

U.S. Small Business Administration announced that Federal Economic Injury Disaster Loans are available to small businesses, small agricultural cooperatives, small businesses engaged in aquaculture and most private nonprofit organizations located in Androscoggin, Cumberland, Franklin, Kennebec, Knox, Lincoln, Oxford, Sagadahoc, Somerset, Waldo and York in Maine as a result of the drought that began on Sept. 27, 2016.

The loan amount can be up to \$2 million with interest rates of 2.625 percent for private nonprofit organizations and 4 percent for small businesses, with terms up to 30 years. Applicants may apply online using the Electronic Loan Application (ELA) via SBA's secure website at <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela>.

Disaster loan information and application forms may also be obtained by calling the SBA's Customer Service Center at 800-659-2955 (800-877-8339 for the deaf and hard-of-hearing) or by sending an email to disastercustomerservice@sba.gov. Loan applications can be downloaded from www.sba.gov/disaster. Completed applications should be mailed to: U.S. Small Business Administration, Processing and Disbursement Center, 14925 Kingsport Road, Fort Worth, TX 76155.

Completed loan applications must be returned to SBA no later than June 5, 2017.

2016 All Crop - Primary and Contiguous Counties Eligible for Disaster Assistance (updated 10/19/16)		
State/Territory	Primary County	St/Co FIPS Code
Maine	Androscoggin	23001
Maine	Cumberland	23005
Maine	Kennebec	23011
Maine	Lincoln	23015
Maine	Oxford	23017
Maine	Sagadahoc	23023
Maine	York	23031
State/Territory	Contiguous County	St/Co FIPS Code
Maine	Franklin	23007
Maine	Knox	23013
Maine	Somerset	23025
Maine	Waldo	23027

 Eligible for temporary variance from pasture rule

MCS Requests Temporary Variances for Pasture Rule

by Kate Newkirk, Interim Director

As noted in our article "The 2016 Drought" many dairies and ruminant livestock producers were calling MCS because they were worried about their ability to meet the Livestock Feed and Pasture Rule requirements (NOP 205.237 – Livestock Feed and NOP 205.240 – Pasture Practice Standard).

As August brought no significant rainfall MCS and MOFGA's Ag Services designed a Producer Drought Survey for ruminant livestock producers to document how conditions were affecting their ability to comply with the Livestock Feed and Pasture Rule requirements. The open and honest participation in this survey was critical for MCS to form an argument to the NOP for a temporary variance from NOP 205.237 & NOP 205.240.

With the Secretary of Agriculture's September 7, 2016 declaration of York and the contiguous counties of Cumberland and Oxford as drought disaster areas, MCS on September 15, 2016 sent in its

first ever request for a Temporary Variance under NOP 205.290. MCS requested a variance be granted to reduce the average DMI from pasture from 30% to 15% (NOP 205.237) and the number of days on pasture reduced from 120 days to 90 days (NOP 205.240) for 2016.

On September 30, 2016 Elanor Starmer granted the requested variances for York, Cumberland and Oxford Counties.

However, the drought continued into the fall and on October 5, 2016 the Secretary of Agriculture further declaration 6 additional counties; Androscoggin, Cumberland, Kennebec, Lincoln, Oxford and Sagadahoc as primary disaster areas along with 4 contiguous counties; Franklin, Knox, Somerset and Waldo. With this declaration MCS submitted a second Temporary Variance under NOP 205.290 on October 15, 2016 for affected clients

in Kennebec, Lincoln, Franklin, Somerset and Waldo Counties not covered under the first declaration.

On October 25, 2016 Elanor Starmer granted this second request.

In summary, dairy and ruminant livestock producers in the eight counties granted a temporary variance, Cumberland, Franklin, Kennebec, Lincoln, Oxford, Somerset, Waldo and York, are eligible for a reduction of their DMI from pasture from 30% to 15% and number of days on pasture from 120 days to 90 days for the 2016 season.

Certified organic dairy and ruminant livestock producers in these counties who would like to take advantage of the reduced grazing requirement should be in touch with Katie Webb (kwebb@mofga.org or 207-568-6035) **no later than December 1, 2016** to discuss eligibility and next steps.

2016 Allowed Temporary Variances

Company / Producer	Location	Date of AMS Decision	Effective Date	Expiration	Certifying Agent	Remarks
Certified organic ruminant livestock producers in Maine	Counties in Maine declared as primary or contiguous drought disaster areas by Secretary Vilsack in calendar year 2016	9/30/2016 <u>2nd Date:</u> 10/25/16	9/30/2016 <u>2nd Date:</u> 10/25/16	2016 grazing season	MOFGA Certification Services, LLC	The temporary variance applies to the organic pasture requirements § 205.237(c) with the following restrictions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Applies to organic ruminant livestock producers in Maine counties (York, Cumberland, Oxford, Kennebec, Lincoln, Franklin, Somerset and Waldo) declared as primary or contiguous drought disaster areas by Secretary Vilsack in calendar year 2016. 2. Applies to non-irrigated pasture only. 3. Ruminants must graze on organic pasture for at least 90 days instead of 120 days during the grazing season. 4. Ruminants must obtain, on average, at least 15 percent of their dry matter intake (DMI) from pasture during the grazing season.

