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USVI Farmers Have Until Sept. 30 to Seek Up to $8,000 in Federal Transportation-Cost Reimbursements

USDA's transportation reimbursement program can offset eligible costs for moving farm products and production inputs, with applications due Sept. 30 and receipts due Nov. 2. Nearly 110 USVI producers received roughly $64,000 through the program last year.

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Virgin Islands farmers and livestock producers have until Sept. 30 to apply for a federal program that reimburses a portion of the transportation costs they incur moving agricultural products and production inputs, with payments generally capped at $8,000 per producer for fiscal year 2026.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Reimbursement Transportation Cost Payment Program, or RTCP, is intended specifically for farmers and ranchers operating in places where geography creates unusually high transportation expenses. Along with the U.S. Virgin Islands, eligible areas include Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands and several other U.S.-affiliated insular jurisdictions.

For Virgin Islands producers, the program can help offset eligible expenses associated with transporting agricultural commodities as well as inputs used to produce them. That means assistance is not limited to the cost of moving crops or livestock products to market; qualifying transportation expenses associated with bringing production inputs into an agricultural operation can also be considered.

Enrollment for the 2026 program opened July 20 and closes Sept. 30. Producers then have until Nov. 2 to provide supporting documentation showing the transportation costs they incurred. USDA says applicants should retain records such as receipts, invoices and shipping documentation sufficient to verify the expenses being claimed.

The $8,000 figure is a payment cap, not an automatic award. Actual reimbursements are based on eligible documented transportation costs and the applicable payment calculation. USDA says the cap could be increased if total claims do not exhaust the money available for the program. If eligible claims exceed available funding, payments may instead be reduced proportionately.

Congress provided $3.5 million for the fiscal 2026 program. USDA distributed approximately $3.3 million to more than 1,200 producers across all eligible jurisdictions through the 2025 version of RTCP.

Virgin Islands farmers were among those recipients. In March, USDA reported that nearly 110 producers in the territory were receiving approximately $64,000 in combined payments for eligible 2025 transportation costs. Marcinda Kester, the Farm Service Agency's State Executive Director for the Virgin Islands, said at the time that the assistance was intended to reduce financial pressure created by transportation expenses and help agricultural operations in remote areas remain viable.

Producers seeking assistance for 2026 must submit an RTCP application through the Farm Service Agency. The USDA Service Center serving the territory is located at 4401 Estate Sion Farm, Suite 2, in Christiansted, St. Croix, and the Farm Service Agency can be reached at 340-773-9146, extension 100. USDA also allows producers to locate their servicing office and obtain program information through Farmers.gov.

With the Sept. 30 enrollment deadline approaching, USDA encourages applicants to submit all eligible transportation expenses rather than limiting their claims to the standard $8,000 cap, since the maximum payment could be increased if sufficient program funding remains available.