



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

May 8, 2026

The Honorable Brooke L. Rollins
Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins:

In accordance with 7 CFR 759, I request a Secretarial Disaster Designation for all counties in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania due to the significant damage caused by below-freezing temperatures that impacted numerous crops across the state on April 21, 2026.

After several weeks of warm weather in the early spring that pushed blossoms on fruits and ornamental trees, widespread freezing temperatures recently settled over Pennsylvania, with some farms recording temperatures in the low 20s. Farms experiencing extended periods of widespread low temperatures as a result of this freeze are suffering substantial losses in many fruit varieties — including a number of fruits including peaches, cherries, apricots, pears, strawberries, grapes and many apple varieties that were well into blossom and in the early stages of producing fruit. Christmas tree, landscape, and nursery crops also reported similar damages due to trees, bushes, and shrubs coming out of dormancy at the precise time of the freeze incident.

According to reports provided by growers to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, losses are well above the 30 percent disaster trigger as a result of these freezing temperatures, with some growers anticipating a 100 percent loss. As growers, producers and nursery owners assess these damages in the weeks ahead, we will have a better understanding of impacts, however damage is anticipated to be severe and widespread. As one fruit grower stated on a recent industry call, “...my farm is over 100 years old, and there is not a generation alive that remembers a freeze quite like this. This is a historical event.”

I urge you to recognize this emergency and declare a Secretarial Disaster Designation for the entirety of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, which has been impacted by these below-freezing temperatures. A Secretarial Designation will open the availability of low-interest loans from the USDA to help growers manage the ongoing cost of orchard, vineyard, and tree maintenance. USDA assistance will provide bridge assistance for growers as they also prepare for the 2027 growing season and beyond.

If your staff has any questions, or needs additional information, please reach out to Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding at (717) 787-4737.

Sincerely,



Governor Josh Shapiro

Enclosures:

Rice Fruit Company letter
PennAg Industries Association letter
Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association letter
Penn State Extension letter
Pennsylvania Farm Bureau letter
State Horticultural Association of Pennsylvania letter