



## Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

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### DEM ANNOUNCES THAT \$380,000 IN GRANTS IS AVAILABLE FOR RHODE ISLAND FOOD AND FARMING BUSINESSES

PROVIDENCE – The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) announced today \$380,000 is available to help grow Rhode Island farm and food businesses and increase the competitiveness of local products in the marketplace. The funding is part of the Local Agriculture and Seafood Act (LASA) and Farm Viability grant programs – which combined have invested over \$3 million to accelerate growth of Rhode Island’s green economy and support small businesses.

"Investing in these popular grant programs boosts our state’s vibrant food economy and the competitiveness of Rhode Island-grown agricultural products and local seafood," said DEM Director Janet Coit. "Farming and fishing are an important part of our heritage and increasingly vital to our economy, and these grants will help farmers, fishers and food businesses start or expand their operations in Rhode Island. I’m excited to announce this latest grant round and look forward to the initiatives and businesses it helps inspire."

#### LASA Grant Program

Up to \$20,000 awards are available through the LASA grant program to help spur growth of local agriculture, aquaculture, and seafood industries. Eligible entities include new and small farmers, fishers, food producers, and non-profits. Both program and capital projects are eligible for funding. Priority is given to initiatives that (1) support the entry, growth and sustainability of small or beginning Rhode Island farmers, aquaculture producers and fishers; (2) foster new collaborations or share new information among Rhode Island’s food partners; (3) support new products or new sales channels for clearly defined markets; (4) enhance access to, and availability of agricultural land for producers, including farm transition planning and implementation; or (5) address gap areas or implementation needs identified in Rhode Island’s Food Strategy, *Relish Rhody* ([www.relishrhody.com](http://www.relishrhody.com)).

Now in its fifth year, the LASA program is a public-private partnership administered jointly with the Rhode Island Food Policy Council – with generous funding support from the van Beuren Charitable Foundation, the Henry P. Kendall Foundation, and the Rhode Island Foundation. A total of \$230,000 is available for the 2018 grant round. To date, over \$900,000 has been awarded through LASA across 70 projects statewide. For more information on the LASA program or to apply, visit [DEM’s website](http://DEM's website). Online applications are highly preferred and must be submitted directly to the Rhode Island Food Policy Council by 11:59 p.m. on March 1. The application is available at <https://rifoodcouncil.wufoo.com/forms/k1j6n2w30gtkztf/>. Additional

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information, including instructions for completing the application, is available on the [Rhode Island Food Policy Council website](#). Hand-delivered and mailed applications must be received by DEM's Division of Agriculture by 4:00 p.m. on March 1. Awards will be announced as part of Rhode Island's Ag Day celebration in the spring. Additional information is also available on the RI Food Policy website.

### **Farm Viability Grant Program**

Grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$50,000 are available through the Farm Viability Grant Program, made possible by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. These grants support local specialty crop production as well as efforts to grow the marketplace for these crops in Rhode Island. USDA defines specialty crops as fruits and vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts, and nursery crops, including floriculture and turf grass.

Eligible entities include farmers or community groups engaged in research, marketing, food safety/security, plant health, buy-local initiatives, and/or development of cooperatives. Projects will be funded for up to two years. Funded projects must support the broad competitiveness of locally-grown specialty crops in Rhode Island. Initiatives that benefit a sole commercial product or provide a profit to a single individual or group will not be considered. A total of \$150,000 is available for this grant round. To date, over \$2 million has been invested through this program to support growth of specialty crops in Rhode Island. For more information on the Farm Viability program, visit [DEM's website](#). Applications accompanied by a W9 form should be mailed to DEM Division of Agriculture, Room 370, 235 Promenade Street, Providence, RI 02908 and postmarked no later than March 31, 2018.

In addition to these grant programs, DEM works across many fronts to accelerate growth of the local food economy, which supports 60,000 jobs in Rhode Island. The department continues to make investments in critical infrastructure as well as provide farm incubation space to new farmers through its Urban Edge and Snake Den farm properties. Rhode Island is one of few states where the number of farms is on the rise – now standing at 1,243 farms. The state is also a leader in the nation in the percent of its farms selling directly to the public. Green industries in Rhode Island account for more than 15,000 jobs and contribute \$2.5 billion to the economy.

Local seafood is poised to spur the next wave of food-based economic growth. In partnership with the Seafood Marketing Collaborative, DEM developed the RI Seafood brand to uniquely identify Rhode Island seafood in the marketplace and help local fishermen and distributors grow their businesses. In 2016, more than 106 million pounds of seafood arrived at Rhode Island ports, with an export value over \$1 billion. For more information on Rhode Island seafood, visit [www.seafoodri.com](http://www.seafoodri.com).

For more information on DEM programs and initiatives, visit [www.dem.ri.gov](http://www.dem.ri.gov). Follow us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/RhodeIslandDEM](https://www.facebook.com/RhodeIslandDEM) or on Twitter (@RhodeIslandDEM) for timely updates.