



USDA Invests in Energy Projects in Florida



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Gainesville, Florida, August 21, 2019 – State Director for Rural Development, Philip L. Leary today announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is awarding grants to reduce energy costs for ag producers and rural-based businesses.

“Lowering energy costs helps rural businesses improve their bottom line and create jobs,” said Bette Brand, Administrator of the Rural Business Service agency. “Under the leadership of President Trump and Agriculture Secretary Perdue, USDA is committed to increasing economic development in America’s rural communities through strong partnerships because when rural America thrives, all of America thrives.”

Under today’s announcement, USDA is investing \$63,721 through the [Rural Energy for America Program](#) (REAP) for renewable energy and energy efficiency projects across Florida. Congress appropriated \$50 million for REAP grants and loan guarantees in fiscal year 2019. USDA will make additional funding announcements in the REAP program in coming weeks.

Recipients can use REAP funding for a variety of needs, such as conducting energy audits and installing renewable energy systems such as biomass, geothermal, hydropower and solar. Funds also can be used to make energy efficiency improvements to heating, ventilation and cooling systems; insulation; and lighting and refrigeration. Listed below are a few examples of how farmers, rural business owners and institutions are making investments in their operations through REAP.

In April 2017, President Donald J. Trump established the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity to identify legislative, regulatory and policy changes that could promote agriculture and prosperity in rural communities. In January 2018, Secretary Perdue presented the Task Force's findings to President Trump. These findings included 31 recommendations to align the federal government with state, local and tribal governments to take advantage of opportunities that exist in rural America. Supporting the rural workforce was a cornerstone recommendation of the task force.

To view the report in its entirety, please view the [Report to the President of the United States from the Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity](#) (PDF, 5.4 MB). In addition, to view the categories of the recommendations, please view the [Rural Prosperity infographic](#) (PDF, 190 KB).

Florida recipients are:

County	Recipient	Amount	Purpose
Levy	Fanning Springs Storage, Inc.	\$16,625	Installing a Solar Array System
Indian River	Fellsmere Azteca Inc.	\$4,941	Upgrade HVAC and Refrigeration
Escambia	Darren Hiebert	\$4,597	Upgrade Oxygen Sensors
Escambia	Steven K. Hiebert	\$15,071	Upgrade Oxygen Sensors
Levy	Hyldemoer and Company LLC	\$2,500	Installing a Solar Array System
Alachua	Pickett Weaponry Service Inc.	\$19,987	Installing a Solar Array

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities and create jobs in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community facilities such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov.

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