



# News Release

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## USDA Invests \$1.12 Million in Vermont Businesses to Lower Energy Costs Through Rural Energy for America Program

*Projects Funded by President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act Strengthen American Communities in 39 States and Guam*

**BRUNSWICK, ME, July 26, 2024** – U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary **Tom Vilsack** announced from the Brunswick Farmers Market today that USDA is partnering with farmers and small businesses to expand access to clean energy and lower energy bills through the [Rural Energy for America Program \(REAP\)](#) and the [Rural Energy for America Technical Assistance Grant Program](#). Today, USDA is investing **[\\$163 million in loans, grants and technical assistance](#)** that will support 338 clean energy projects in 39 States and Guam. Many of the projects are funded by the bipartisan Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), advanced by the Biden-Harris Administration's *Investing in America* Agenda: to grow the U.S. economy from the middle out and the bottom up. The IRA is the nation's largest-ever investment to combat the climate crisis. **In Vermont, \$1,126,925 in REAP grants** will help small businesses implement climate-smart solutions into their operations, reducing energy costs and carbon emissions.

"The Biden-Harris Administration is partnering with people in rural communities across our nation to expand access to clean energy and save rural Americans money," Secretary Vilsack said. "We are hard at work, continuing what we've always done, supporting rural small businesses and farmers as they create jobs for their communities and drive economic prosperity."

"Today's announcement fortifies and continues our country's progress to a clean-energy future," said **Sarah Waring, State Director for USDA Rural Development in Vermont and New Hampshire**. "This funding offers economic solutions for our rural small businesses, and thus a healthier economy and environment for our small rural communities. The Rural Energy for America Program is a proven benefit to the bottom line that determines the success of farms and agricultural producers, manufacturers, retail stores and other small businesses in Vermont and across the U.S. that deserve a break and a boost. Through the Infrastructure Reduction Act, the Biden-Harris Administration made REAP even more powerful and transformative—doubling its potential match and maximum grant amount—following through on its promise to help rural Americans live happier, healthier, more rewarding lives."

Since the start of the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA has invested more than **\$2.2 billion through REAP** in 7,566 renewable energy and energy efficiency improvements. These projects will help rural small businesses and farmers lower energy bills by an average of \$25,000 a year, generate new renewable energy income, and strengthen their resiliency of operations. The energy

generated and saved from these projects would provide **enough electricity to power more than 630,000 homes** over the course of a year.

REAP enables agricultural producers and rural small business owners to expand their use of wind, solar, geothermal and small hydropower energy and make energy efficiency improvements. These innovations help them increase their income, grow their businesses and address climate change while lowering energy costs for American families.

Examples of awards being announced today:

- The **Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets** will use a **\$181,641** REAP Technical Assistance grant to provide guidance for ag producers in disadvantaged communities when applying for federal funding and executing environmental reports for manure digesters.
- **Running Saps Mapleworks** in Huntington received **\$44,996** to replace a wood-fired evaporator with an electric model—a near total offset of historical energy consumption—reducing costs by \$4,600/yr. and conserving 200 million BTUs of timber.
- **Does' Leap Farm** in East Fairfield, with help from a **\$19,464** grant, will install solar panels on a barn to replace roughly 95 percent of its power usage. The array will produce an estimated 15,900 kilowatt hours annually, saving the Farm \$1,300.

USDA continues to accept REAP applications and has set aside a portion of the program funds to support underutilized renewable energy technologies, like wind and geothermal power. For additional information, contact a [local energy coordinator](#).

USDA Rural Development (RD) offers loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities, create jobs and improve the quality of life for millions of Americans in rural areas. REAP is a part of the President's Justice40 initiative which sets a goal that 40% of the benefits from certain federal investments go to disadvantaged communities. The program supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community facilities such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural, tribal and high-poverty areas. Visit the [Rural Data Gateway](#) to learn how and where these investments are impacting rural America. To subscribe to USDA RD updates, visit the [GovDelivery Subscriber Page](#).

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate-smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov).

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