



News Release

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USDA Invests \$464 Million in Renewable Energy Infrastructure to Help Rural Communities, Businesses and Ag Producers Build Back Better

Projects Will Support Climate-Smart Solutions to Lower Energy Costs Across the Country, Including Vermont and New Hampshire

WASHINGTON, Sept. 9, 2021 – U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that the Department is [investing \\$464 million to build or improve renewable energy infrastructure and to help rural communities, agricultural producers and businesses lower energy costs](#) in 48 states and Puerto Rico.

“USDA continues to prioritize climate-smart infrastructure to help rural America build back better, stronger and more equitably than ever before,” Vilsack said. “We recognize that lowering energy costs for small businesses and agricultural producers helps to expand economic development and employment opportunities for people in America’s rural towns and communities. The investments we are announcing today demonstrate how the Biden-Harris Administration has put rural communities at the heart of climate action and climate-smart solutions.”

“Climate-smart infrastructure is a driving force behind economic development in our towns and villages,” said Cheryl Ducharme, Acting State Director for USDA Rural Development in Vermont and New Hampshire. “With businesses and municipalities taking action to address the impacts of climate change and creating more jobs, more people will join the cause of making our rural communities better places to live, now and for future generations.”

USDA is financing \$129 million of these investments through the [Rural Energy for America Program](#). This program provides funding to help agricultural producers and rural small businesses purchase and install renewable energy systems and make energy efficiency improvements. These climate-smart investments will conserve and generate more than 379 million kilowatt-hours (kWh) in rural America, which equates to enough electricity to power 35,677 homes per year.

USDA is financing \$335 million of these investments through the [Electric Loan Program](#). The loans will help build or improve 1,432 miles of line to strengthen reliability in rural areas. The loans include \$102 million for investments in smart grid technology, which uses digital communications to detect and react to local changes in electricity usage.

REAP projects in Vermont and New Hampshire include:

- Named after the Androscoggin River and located in the heart of Gorham, NH, the Scoggins General Store is a popular destination. An 18.75kW roof-mounted solar array will generate 81 percent of electricity needs, saving over \$2,700/yr.
- A 22.3kW roof-mounted solar array will supply Northeast Kingdom Homecare in Newport, Vt. with 110 percent of its electricity needs while decreasing its carbon footprint, saving about \$3,800 annually.
- In Harrisville, NH, Sarah Heffron will install a 37kW roof-mounted solar array at Mayfair Farm. The energy generated is valued at almost \$6,000 and will help the diverse business expand upon its offerings of pork, lamb, hay, syrup, fruits and berries.
- Sheena Brown will establish a 21.7kW, ground-mounted solar array at her Derby, Vermont dairy farm, known as Skyline Holsteins. The array is estimated to produce 90 percent of the farm's electrical needs, saving Sheena over \$4,500 annually.

To learn more about these and other resources for rural areas, contact a [USDA Rural Development state office](#).

Under the Biden-Harris Administration, Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities, create jobs and improve the quality of life for millions of Americans 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, tribal and high-poverty areas. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov. If you'd like to subscribe to USDA Rural Development updates, visit our [GovDelivery subscriber page](#).

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