

FEMA Invests \$2.6 Million to Strengthen Puerto Rico's Agriculture Industry

Release Date: Tháng 8 26, 2020

GUAYNABO, Puerto Rico – Puerto Rico's agricultural industry is preparing to receive over **\$2.6 million** from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Central Office of Recovery, Reconstruction and Resilience of Puerto Rico, or COR3. This investment will lead to the recovery of this sector, which suffered multi-million-dollar losses due to the impact of Hurricane María.

This infusion of funds will provide an economic boost to the industry after the loss of 40 percent of the country's agricultural infrastructure.

“Agriculture has a strong connection with the culture on the Island and with the people who for generations have worked the land with their own hands. There is a lot of history in these crops and we will continue to do our part to strengthen this sector that is worthy of admiration,” said Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, Alex Amparo.

Among the obligations is **\$1.4 million** to repair the facilities of the Coffee Trade Program for the Administration for the Development of Agricultural Businesses of the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture, located at the Yahuecas neighborhood in Adjuntas. This is the only place on the Island where local and imported coffee is stored for processing and it also employs 13 people. According to agronomist Jorge Quiles Maldonado, director of the program, its economic impact is incalculable, since it encompasses multiple industries that revolve around the product, its packaging, distribution and sale. Also, the facilities have a laboratory where farmers can measure the quality of their coffee.

Another obligation of around **\$582,000** for the Department of Agriculture is destined for repairs to the Mercadeo Warehouse and Limestone Quarry located in the Hato Viejo neighborhood in Ciales. There, lime is processed to correct the acidity levels in very acidic soils in order to improve crop yields, a key process for coffee, citrus, plantain and banana plantations in the mountainous area.



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For his part, the Secretary of the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture, agronomist Carlos A. Flores Ortega said he was pleased with the approval of these federal funds. “Today, we can take a step forward in the recovery of the agricultural sector. These allocations represent an aid to infrastructure improvements and, without a doubt, to improve services in favor of our thousands of farmers,” added Flores Ortega.

Similarly, **\$108,000** were obligated for the *Corporación de Conservación Etnoecológica Criolla, Inc.*, an ethnoecological conservation corporation, in Caguas, to replace equipment in its museum such as tools and vehicles. This nonprofit manages the facilities of the municipality’s Botanical and Cultural Garden, promotes eco-tourism projects and oversees research and development of agricultural technology to be transferred to community agro-ecological businesses.

The municipality of Maricao will also carry out repairs to its warehouse located in the Indiera Baja neighborhood, with an obligation of nearly **\$61,000**. Part of these funds will be used to reinforce the roof, windows and doors to withstand winds of up to 170 miles per hour. This warehouse provides assistance to farmers in Maricao and neighboring farms that harvest coffee, plantains, bananas and oranges, among other crops, and also develops various programs of its Department of Agriculture.

On the other hand, **\$55,000** was granted to La Enseñat Farm, in the Bucarabones neighborhood of Las Marías for repairs to the roof of its storage area. This farm has an extensive plantation of about 500,000 small coffee bushes and roughly 30,000 small citrus trees. This farm employs about 25 people and operates under a private investment and collaborative agreement with the Department of Agriculture, who owns the land. All crops that are produced are sold locally.

“Puerto Rico's recovery has a significant impact across all sectors. All areas have a fundamental role to play in building resilience for the future. Our efforts to secure obligations are ongoing so that subrecipient projects are completed and developed in ways that all residents deserve,” said the Executive Director of the Central Office for Recovery, Reconstruction, and Resilience (COR3), Ottmar Chavez.



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To date, FEMA has obligated over **\$7.2 billion** for costs related to hurricanes Irma and Maria, including projects to help rebuild infrastructure throughout Puerto Rico. Roughly 1,200 local staff are leading the efforts and play a key role in moving recovery forward. Despite unprecedented challenges, our resolve remains undeterred as we continue this banner year of recovery. The Agency is part of the transformation and the revival of the island, a process that is becoming more evident every day and that will benefit the island's residents and its future generations.

For more information on Puerto Rico's recovery from Hurricane María, visit fema.gov/disaster/4339 and recuperacion.pr. Follow us on our social networks at Facebook.com/FEMAPuertoRico, Facebook.com/COR3pr and on [@COR3pr](https://Twitter.com/COR3pr).

