

New Equipment for the Puerto Rico Veterinary and Agrological Laboratory Following FEMA Allocation

Release Date: Tháng 6 22, 2023

FEMA awarded over \$1.6 million for these and other Department of Agriculture facilities

San Juan, Puerto Rico – The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) allocated nearly \$670,000 to replace equipment for the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture’s (PRDA) Veterinary and Agrological Laboratory, due to damage after Hurricane María. The facility performs all tests and certification of animals exported and imported into Puerto Rico to ensure that they are free of disease.

The federal funds are part of other FEMA obligations to the Department of Agriculture, which already has over \$18 million for its permanent work projects.

“These laboratories are unique in Puerto Rico due to the services they offer to the agricultural community on the island and abroad. The monitoring and tests performed here have a direct effect on the control of diseases in the food chain and animal population in Puerto Rico,” explained Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator José G. Baquero.

The veterinary laboratory handles animal disease control and various bacteriological, chemical, immunological and pathological analysis tests. Meanwhile, the agrological laboratory inspects and tests plants, soil and water; studies various crop diseases; controls pests and pesticides; and operates machinery for testing and certifying food, concentrated food for livestock and fertilizer tests, among others.

PRDA Secretary Ramón González Beiró noted that “in terms of safety, agriculture and for consumers, these replacements are extremely significant, starting with the tests carried out on animals, tests carried out on food and on fertilizers. We’re making sure that farmers are getting what it actually says on the label and that



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Page 1 of 4

we're not putting something in the ground that is against the law.”

The agency's funds are earmarked to replace a fire alarm as well as hematology equipment and testing instruments for viral diseases, among other electrical and technical equipment.

Other FEMA Obligations to the Department of Agriculture

Meanwhile, the Marketing Warehouse in Ciales is already under reconstruction after over \$582,000 from the agency. This is one of the centers where the Department of Agriculture buys products from farmers—such as plantains, bananas, pumpkins, lettuce and tomatoes—to sell to hospitals and school cafeterias. The structure, which resumed operations in August 2022, employs about 10 people.

The work for this facility involves painting and replacement of lighting, fan extractors, water tanks and other infrastructure elements, such as doors, windows and air conditioning. Mitigation measures for this project will reinforce the equipment to make it more resistant to strong winds.

Meanwhile, Finca Monterey in Dorado will benefit from about \$360,500 for improvements to its facilities, mainly for the roof, air conditioners and water pumps. This is one of the few places on the island that produce pumpkin, plantain and bean seeds, among others, to sell to farmers. The farm employs 12 people and has a garage, several warehouses and a machine shop.

“Through the reconstruction of the Department of Agriculture's facilities around Puerto Rico, we support the development of various industries related to food production and farming. The acquisition of this new equipment will strengthen the operations of this laboratory where crucial analyses that contribute to the food safety of our people are performed. At COR3, we are committed to continue assisting them in this important process until the resilient transformation of their infrastructure is completed,” said the Executive Director for the Puerto Rico Central Office for Recovery, Reconstruction and Resiliency. Manuel A. Laboy Rivera.

To date, FEMA has awarded nearly \$30.5 billion for some 10,700 Public Assistance projects aimed at rebuilding a more resilient Puerto Rico for future



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weather events.

For more information about Puerto Rico’s recovery, visit fema.gov/disaster/4339, fema.gov/disaster/4473 and recovery.pr. Follow us on our social media at Facebook.com/FEMAPuertoRico, Facebook.com/COR3pr and Twitter @COR3pr.



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