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# Governor Sherrill Requests Disaster Designation from U.S. Department of Agriculture

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## *\$300M in Estimated April Freeze Losses Prompt Request for Federal Disaster Designation Across New Jersey Counties*

**TRENTON** – Governor Sherrill sent a letter to Secretary Brooke Rollins of the United States Department of Agriculture, supporting a request for Secretarial Disaster Designation from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, seeking to unlock critical federal relief for New Jersey growers facing devastating losses following an unprecedented April freeze event.

In mid-April 2026, New Jersey experienced an unusual weather sequence that devastated the agricultural sector. A prolonged warm spell pushed temperatures above 90 degrees in some areas, causing fruit trees and crops to flower earlier than normal. That warm period was immediately followed by a sharp temperature drop, with lows in the 20s recorded across parts of the state between April 19 and April 22. The timing was particularly destructive as crops were at a critical developmental stage when the freeze hit, resulting in severe injury to blossoms and newly forming fruit.

The damage was widespread, affecting peaches, cherries, pears, grapes, plums, strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, apples, and other crops across the entire state. Some farmers reported losses approaching or exceeding 90 percent. In several regions, the losses may prove season-ending for key fruit crops.

Loss assessments reviewed by the New Jersey Department of Agriculture confirm damage exceeding the 30 percent crop loss disaster threshold required to qualify for federal assistance. Considering those findings and early estimates placing total statewide losses at or above \$300 million, Governor Sherrill is urging Secretary Rollins to declare the federal designation New Jersey's growers urgently need to recover, sustain their operations, and protect the state's agricultural capacity for seasons ahead.

### **New Jersey State and Federal Legislators Join Governor Sherrill's Call for Federal Support:**

"This freeze was unlike anything our growers have experienced in decades, and the damage is staggering. An entire season of peaches, apples, and grapes were almost entirely decimated in a matter of hours. Many other fruits are also suffering significant losses. New Jersey farmers urgently need federal support to recover from this disaster, and swift approval of the state's disaster designation request is an essential first step to helping them rebuild" **said Senator Cory Booker.**

"The devastating spring freeze in April hit our farmers hard, especially as they continue to face increasing financial pressures from inflation and rising fuel and operating costs," **said Senator Nilsa Cruz-Perez, Chair of the Senate Economic Growth Committee.** "This Secretarial Disaster Designation would provide desperately needed relief to the Garden State farming community, helping these essential businesses recover their losses and continue the vital operations on which we all depend."

"I have spent the past few weeks speaking with farmers about the damage their crops sustained from April's below-freezing cold snap and I know too well that many are struggling right now," **said Assemblywoman Andrea Katz, Chairwoman of the Assembly Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee.** "Agriculture is one of our most important economic drivers in New Jersey, and our family farms can't afford to sustain losses brought on by the weather. A Disaster Declaration will pave the way farmers to receive low-interest loans to help them bridge the gap, so that they can keep producing Jersey Fresh high-quality fruits, vegetables, and other crops."

For a copy of the letter, [click here](#).

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