

## USDA Energy Reduction Assistant Grants

**The Rural Energy for America Program** – formerly the “Rural Energy and Energy Efficiency Improvements Program” was established as a result of the 2002 Farm Bill. The program provides financial assistance to agricultural producers and rural small businesses in the form of grants, guaranteed loans, or a combination of the two to install renewable energy systems or make energy efficiency improvements.

Nationwide in September, 705 renewable energy and energy efficiency projects received \$62.5 million in loans and grants in 45 states and Puerto Rico. Of the 705 successful recipients, in Maryland, poultry producer and DPI member Bobbie Reed of Greensboro, Maryland received a USDA grant in the amount of \$7,832 to make energy efficiency improvements on three poultry houses that include the installation of cold cathode lights, door curtains, fan covers, attic vents, and an insulated tunnel door. She also worked with the Maryland Agriculture and Resources Based Industries Development Corporation (MARBIDCO).

In fiscal year 2009, there were 1,485 successful recipients nationwide for renewable energy and energy efficiency projects. Approximately 39 of the awards were to poultry producers. Since the inception of the program, two poultry producers on Delmarva have been successful recipients of the grant program for energy efficiency or renewable energy projects.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture would like more poultry producers on the Delmarva Peninsula to use this grant opportunity. Many growers are continually making improvements to their poultry houses that result in energy conservation, as well as enhancement of poultry production. Although the 2010 funding application procedures have not been published yet, applicants can get a head start now by using last year’s guidelines -- [2009 Energy Guidelines](#). You can call one of the USDA staff listed below to obtain a copy or access it online at the Federal Register website at [www.gpoaccess.gov/fr](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr). In the Quick Search field enter “page 24769” and submit. You will see the link to the May 26, 2009, federal register for inviting applications for Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvements Grants and Guaranteed Loans and Renewable Energy Feasibility Studies Grants.

If you are interested in these grants, we recommend that you begin the application process now. Under last year’s guidelines, growers could qualify for a USDA grant to pay for 25% of the cost of these improvements. The minimum energy efficiency grant was \$1,500 and the maximum is \$250,000. For growers interested in renewable energy improvements such as solar, wind or biomass systems, the renewable energy grant starts at \$2,500 and can go up to \$500,000. To help with the total costs of the project, loan guarantees in coordination with the grant are available for 50% of the project.

Poultry house improvements that are eligible for funding include, but are not limited to replacing lighting systems, any work to make the houses tighter and better insulated like installing dropped ceilings, replacing standard curtains with insulated curtains, and exhaust fan replacement with more efficient fans. The assistance is not limited to poultry houses, but can

be used for any equipment on the farm that includes, for example – energy efficiency projects for grain dryers.

In addition to USDA Rural Development staff and your State Energy Office, there are several resources available to assist you with this grant opportunity. Listed below are some of the contacts:

USDA Rural Development Staff:

For Delaware and Maryland: Signe Hippert (302) 857-3628 or [signe.hippert@de.usda.gov](mailto:signe.hippert@de.usda.gov) and Bruce Weaver (302) 857-3629 or [bruce.weaver@de.usda.gov](mailto:bruce.weaver@de.usda.gov).

For Virginia: Kent Ware (804) 868-5761 or [kent.ware@va.usda.gov](mailto:kent.ware@va.usda.gov) and Laurette Tucker (804) 287-1594 or [laurette.tucker@va.usda.gov](mailto:laurette.tucker@va.usda.gov)

Other Resources:

Scott Lynch, Delaware Energy Office (302) 735-3480

Chris Rice, Maryland Energy Administration (410) 260-7207

Nancy Lazenby, Mississippi Resource Conservation and Development Council –  
Ag Energy Resources, LLC (601) 748-2622

Maryland Agricultural & Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation  
(MARBIDCO) (410) 267-6807 <http://www.marbidco.org/>

Delaware Small Business Development Centers <http://www.delawaresbdc.org/>

Maryland Small Business Development Centers <http://www.mdsbdc.umd.edu/>

Virginia Small Business Development Centers <http://www.virginiasbdc.org/>

University of Delaware Cooperative Extension Service <http://ag.udel.edu/extension>

University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Service <http://extension.umd.edu/>

Delaware State University Cooperative Extension (302) 857-6424

University of Maryland Eastern Shore Cooperative Extension (410) 651-6183

Robin Jones, Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (804) 692-3224  
<http://www.dmme.virginia.gov>

Natural Resources Conservation Service <http://www.va.nrcs.usda.gov/>