The climate in the Northeast has been changing. Winters have been getting warmer and heavy rainstorms are becoming much more common.

Many longtime farmers feel that the seasons have shifted, and the latest climate models indicate that these changes are likely to continue. However, there are many actions farmers and forest landowners in the Northeast can take to lessen the impact – or even take advantage of - these climate trends.

Northeast Climate Hub university partners have led two new studies exploring how a changing climate is affecting regional crops and livestock. These studies highlight species or production systems that might be particularly vulnerable to changing conditions. They also include practical actions one can take to reduce the harmful aspects of some of these changes.

Learn More: go.usa.gov/xnFsR

Highlights from the Northeast Crop Study

An extended period of spring frost risk in perennial fruit crops is likely to result from warmer winter and early spring temperatures.

There will be prospects for more double-cropping and new crops that come with warmer temperatures and a longer frost-free period.

Prolonged periods of spring rains in recent years have delayed planting and offset the potentially positive longer frost-free period.

Highlights from the Northeast Livestock Study

Increased temperatures and more intense storms will increase nutrient losses and gaseous emissions from animal manure.

Temperature increases are likely to slightly reduce dairy cow fertility and milk production.

Increased warmth may benefit broiler production, however future housing will need more insulation and ventilation.
Our purpose is to help develop and deliver science based knowledge and practical information for farmers and land managers to support their decision making related to climate impacts.

To do so, we work in partnership with local, state, and federal governments, land grant institutions, consultants, and private organizations reaching across twelve states from Maine to West Virginia and the District of Columbia. Together, through this extensive network of partners, we’ve worked on a myriad of products from research publications and vulnerability assessments to videos and virtual demonstrations on climate adaptation.

Discover our Partners: go.usa.gov/xnFSh

Regional Landscape

The Northeastern United States is a diverse region containing the seven most densely populated states in the nation.

About 21% of land in these 12 states is farmland (6% of the national total), and 62% of land in our region is classified as timberland.

Altogether, there are about 175,000 farms producing more than $21 billion yearly in agricultural commodities. Animal agriculture is important, particularly dairy and poultry. About half of the field crops and pasture grown in the Northeast are for animal feed. Horticulture and perennial fruits (e.g. apples, pears, blueberries, grapes, cranberries) are also a relatively large portion of total plant production.

Overall, Northeast farms are usually smaller in size, and organic production is higher than other regions.

Helping Farmers Adapt in a Changing Climate

A new USDA report, Adaptation Resources for Agriculture: Responding to Climate Variability and Change in the Midwest and Northeast, was developed specifically to meet the unique needs of agricultural producers, and provide educators and service providers with information and resources to help farmers increase their resilience to weather extremes and a changing climate. It provides a flexible, structured, and self-guided process to identify and assess climate change impacts, challenges, opportunities, and farm-level adaptation tactics for improving responses to extreme and uncertain conditions.

Open Workbook: go.usa.gov/xnFs5

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