

Victorian Floods

Support for growers in the Goulburn Valley

A range of support measures are available for flood-affected growers in the Goulburn Valley. Information about these measures can be found at agriculture.vic.gov.au/floods. For any urgent animal welfare needs or to report agricultural losses and damages resulting from the floods, please contact the VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226.

Flood Recovery Hotline: Victorians affected by the floods can call 1800 560 760 for help with navigating support, clean-up, finding somewhere to stay, mental health and wellbeing support. The recovery hotline is open from 7.30 am – 7.30 pm every day. Press 9 for an interpreter. For more information visit vic.gov.au/2022-flood-recovery.

Rural Financial Counselling Service

The Rural Financial Counselling Service offers free and independent financial information, options, decision making support and referral services to farmers and small, related rural businesses who are in, or at risk of, financial hardship. A Rural Financial Counsellor can help farmers prepare for discussions with their banks to make informed decisions for the future benefit of their business. They can also assist farmers to apply for financial assistance. To connect with your local service, call 1300 771 741.

Victorian Primary Producer Flood Recovery package

Flood Recovery Concessional Loan

Eligible directly affected primary producers may apply for concessional loans of up to \$250,000 to restore or replace damaged assets, and meet general expenses incurred while the clean-up is underway. To apply, visit ruralfinance.com.au or call 1800 260 425.

\$75,000 Flood Recovery Grant

Eligible directly affected primary producers may apply for up to \$75,000 to help with the costs of clean-up and recovery. The grant has a two-tiered payment structure:

- **Tier 1:** An up-front amount of up to \$25,000 is available to applicants with evidence of direct damage and an outline of expected recovery costs.
- **Tier 2:** An additional amount of up to \$50,000 can be accessed with evidence of payment for recovery costs (tax invoices and official receipts).

Note: The Recovery Grants replace the \$10,000 Primary Producer Flood Clean-Up Relief Grants. Producers who accessed the \$10,000 can apply for up to a further \$65,000. A new application form will need to be completed to access this additional funding, but applicants will not be required to re-submit evidence of how they meet program eligibility

To apply, visit ruralfinance.com.au or call 1800 260 425.

\$15,000 Flood Recovery Transport Support

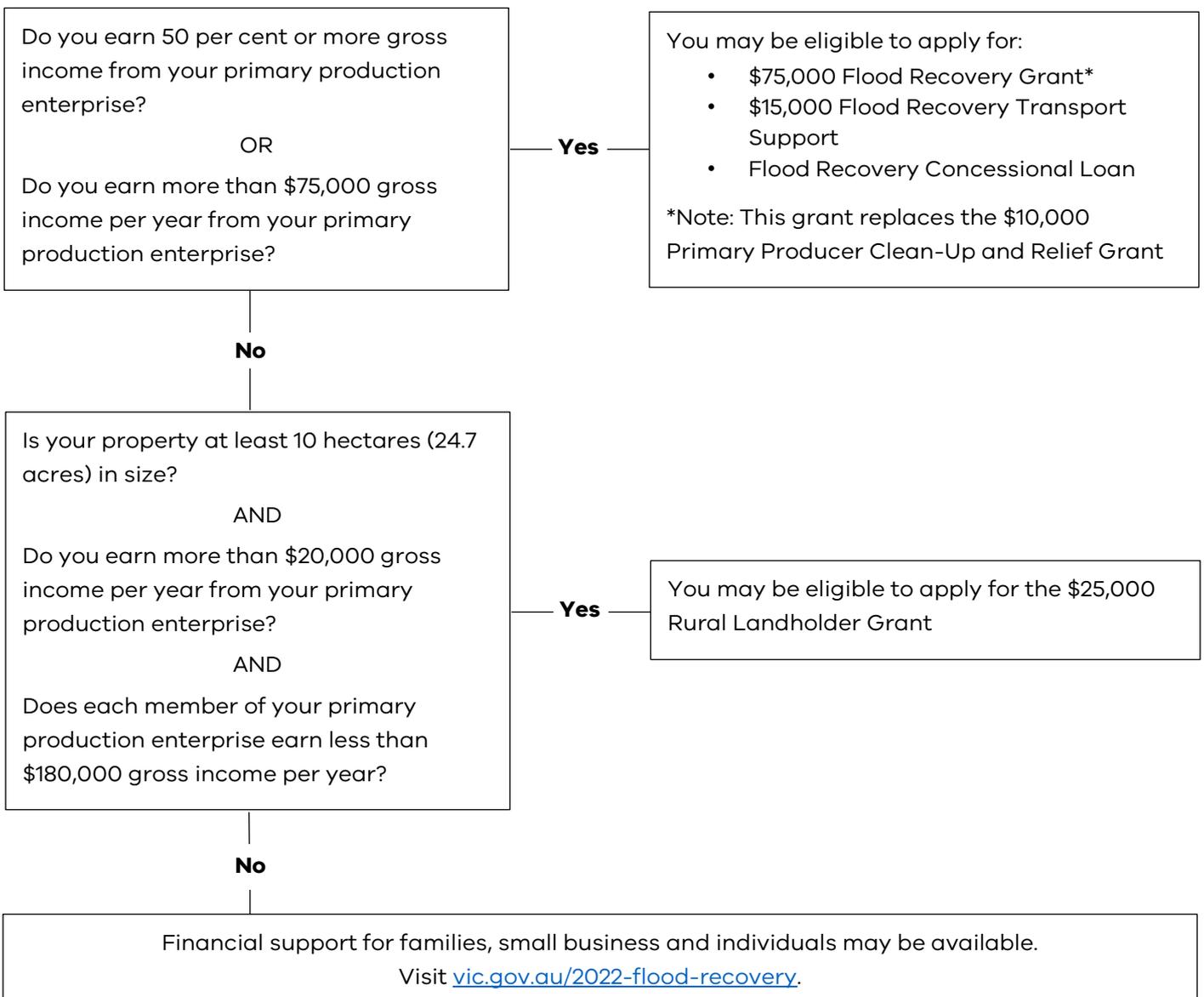
Eligible directly affected primary producers may apply for up to \$15,000 to support 50 per cent of costs for the transport of emergency fodder or stock drinking water, and the movement of livestock for agistment, sale, or slaughter. To apply, visit ruralfinance.com.au or call 1800 260 425.

\$25,000 Rural Landholder Grant

If you do not meet the eligibility requirements for the \$75,000 Flood Recovery Grant, but operate a smaller-scale Primary Production Enterprise, you may be eligible for a Rural Landholder Grant.

Eligible directly affected rural landholders that operate smaller-scale primary production enterprises of at least 10 hectares in size and that earn at least \$20,000 from the primary production business may apply for up to \$25,000 to help with costs of clean-up and recovery. To apply, visit ruralfinance.com.au or call 1800 260 425.

What support might you be eligible for?



Specific eligibility criteria apply to all support programs, please refer to the guidelines for each program for full details. Program guidelines, application forms and a list of local government areas eligible for assistance are available at ruralfinance.com.au. For further information contact Rural Finance on 1800 260 425. For assistance with understanding and applying for financial support contact the Rural Financial Counselling Service on 1300 771 741.

Abandoned orchards

If growers wish to partially or entirely abandon a vineyard or orchard, they need to consider the risks that pests and diseases from their property may present to surrounding producers. This responsibility also applies to a landholder who has taken over or purchased a site but doesn't want to manage the plantings for horticultural purposes due to an intention to redevelop the site.

If a producer is being affected by pests or diseases from a neighbouring neglected orchard or vineyard, the matter can be pursued by contacting the Agriculture Victoria Customer Contact Centre on [136 186](tel:136186). The caller will be provided with a complaint form. The information provided will determine whether the case warrants further investigation..

An inspection may be undertaken that may result in the issuing of an 'Infested Land Notice' using powers under the *Plant Biosecurity Act 2010*. This notice can require the property owner to take action to control pests or diseases.

For further information, call the Customer Contact Centre on [136 186](tel:136186)

Further details on managing abandoned vineyards or orchards are available here:

www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/crops-and-horticulture/fruit-and-nuts/orchard-management/managing-abandoned-vineyards-or-orchards

Further details on the *Plant Biosecurity Act 2010*, including neglected crops, are available here:

www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/biosecurity/moving-plants-and-plant-products/plant-biosecurity-act-2010

Farm Debt Mediation

In Victoria it is compulsory for banks and other creditors to offer mediation to farmers before commencing debt recovery proceedings on farm mortgages.

Under the *Farm Debt Mediation Act 2011*, farmers and creditors can access mediation for efficient and fair resolution of farm debt disputes. At mediation, a neutral and independent mediator helps the farmer and creditor to confidentially reach an agreement about current and future farm debt arrangements.

Farm debt mediation is a voluntary and confidential process that is accessible and low-cost.

Mediation is provided through the Victorian Small Business Commission (VSBC). The VSBC provides pre-mediation assistance to both farmers and creditors, including giving advice about their rights and obligations, giving farmers information on available supports, appointing a mediator and arranging the mediation session.

The cost of attending farm debt mediation in Victoria is subsidised by the Victorian Government.

Farmers who are going to take part in farm debt mediation are encouraged to contact the Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS), or their solicitor, accountant, or another suitably qualified professional.

For more information about farm debt mediation or help in initiating mediation, contact the VSBC on 13 87 22 or visit www.vsbv.vic.gov.au/who-we-help/farmers/