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United States Senate

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May 6, 2011

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

On April 26, 2011, Kansas Governor Sam Brownback wrote requesting that you declare 21 Kansas counties agricultural disaster areas as a result of production losses caused by drought, wild fires, and high winds. I respectfully request that you immediately grant that request.

Ongoing drought conditions have hampered agricultural operations in these counties since the beginning of this year. By declaring this area a disaster, farmers and ranchers in the affected counties will become eligible for emergency loans administered by the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA). In addition to the emergency loans, access to other aid within the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments Program may become available. Such financial assistance is necessary to ensure the continuity of agricultural operations in these counties.

The lack of rainfall is not confined to one corner of Kansas. Farmers and ranchers across the state are feeling the effects of these exceedingly dry conditions. In the coming days, weeks, and months, I anticipate that local FSA offices can expect to start receiving producer requests for the release of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres for emergency grazing and haying. Many counties in the state are approaching or have already achieved the D2 drought threshold on the U.S. Drought Monitor, thereby qualifying them to apply for the emergency grazing designation, while others have achieved the D3 drought threshold on the U.S. Drought Monitor, thereby qualifying them to apply for the emergency haying designation. As these requests are formally made by the Kansas FSA State Executive Director, I ask that you expeditiously review and approve these requests in a timely fashion.

According to USDA data, current U.S. cattle and calves inventories are at the lowest level since the 1950's. Swift approval of emergency grazing and haying requests will help livestock producers avoid having to sell breeding livestock due to forage shortages caused by drought conditions.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. If you would like any more information or require any assistance, please feel free to contact me. I look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Very truly yours,



Jerry Moran

JM:wr

Cc: Sam Brownback, Governor of Kansas
Adrian Polansky, Kansas Executive Director, Farm Service Agency

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