



COLORADO
Governor Jared Polis

To: U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue
From: Jared Polis, Governor, State of Colorado
Date: September 28, 2020
RE: Emergency Relief Needed for Colorado Producers

Dear Honorable Secretary Perdue,

Farmers and ranchers in Colorado are suffering deep financial losses due to persistent drought conditions, extreme weather events, and compounding disasters. Our state's producers report significant barriers to accessing financial relief from multi-year (2018 drought, 2019 freeze, 2020 drought), multi-faceted (economic, environmental, and public health) disasters.

As of August 25th, abnormally dry conditions (D0-D4) covered 100% of the state. Exceptional (D4) drought conditions returned and continue to hold in Kiowa county; 50% of Colorado is experiencing extreme (D3) drought conditions; and 39% of the state is under severe (D2) drought. As of September 4th, USDA drought disaster designations are active for 59 of 64 Colorado counties. Record breaking temperatures statewide are projected to persist over the next three months.

Colorado producers, in all four corners, continue to experience dire ecosystem conditions with depleted soil health, pest pressures, rangeland damage, and a heavy reliance on declining groundwater reserves. In the southeast, hot, dry winds created dust-bowl conditions where normally productive soil kicked up into thick brown clouds, suffocating livestock and causing electronic failures from static electricity. Following a deceptively average winter snowpack (104% of normal), many producers did not opt for early season preventative planting, impacting crop insurance eligibility once drought set in after record hot spring temperatures.

As extreme weather disasters continue to increase in frequency, USDA programs must ensure they effectively meet the contemporary needs and support producers in a timely manner. USDA disaster assistance programs need to accommodate an inclusive range of Colorado's commodities, produce, grains, and livestock, and be structured to properly address the challenges those producers face, such as the current market declines affecting wheat producers.

With Colorado producers affected by compounding, severe disasters, the State of Colorado urges the USDA to evaluate existing emergency support programs to remove crop-type eligibility barriers (as with the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program) and expedite all 2018

and 2019 disaster aid payments, taking any measures needed to provide immediate relief for drought-stricken farmers and ranchers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jared Polis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jared Polis
Governor

