

JON TESTER
MONTANA

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
BANKING
INDIAN AFFAIRS
VETERANS' AFFAIRS
HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

SENATE HART BUILDING
SUITE 311
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
202-224-2644

INTERNET:
<http://tester.senate.gov/contact>

United States Senate

June 23, 2017

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

Today I write to urge you to work with agricultural producers in Montana who are facing severe drought disaster conditions. The U.S Drought Monitor, in recent days, designated six Montana counties at the second highest drought intensity level, extreme drought. The counties include Garfield, McCone, Daniels, Sheridan, Valley, and Roosevelt. The extreme drought is also impacting the Fort Belknap and Fort Peck reservations. Droughts place an incredible strain on the livelihoods of producers, our rural communities, and our food supply. We must act quickly to mitigate the disaster and prevent long-term damage.

The extreme drought designation, along with USDA's approval, allow producers to be eligible for the Livestock Forage Program, Emergency Conservation Program and Emergency Livestock Assistance Program. I ask you to prioritize approving applications to these programs for producers in the extreme drought designated areas. Swift approval will help producers minimize losses and protect their herds and crops.

Additionally, I urge USDA to approve emergency haying and grazing on CRP land as soon as possible. While it's important to observe environmental safeguards, this is an extreme situation that requires all solutions to be on the table.

Montana producers work hard each year to raise livestock and produce a good crop. Unfortunately, sometimes Mother Nature has other ideas. That's why emergency disaster programs are vital to rural America and to our food security. Thank you for your efforts to help Montana producers get through this difficult period.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester

BOZEMAN
(406) 586-4450

BUTTE
(406) 723-3277

GLENDIVE
(406) 365-2391

GREAT FALLS
(406) 452-9585

HELENA
(406) 449-5401

KALISPELL
(406) 257-3360

BILLINGS
(406) 252-0550

MISSOULA
(406) 728-3003