

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 19, 2012

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell:

The drought is currently impacting 61 percent of the continental U.S., including most of the agricultural-intensive regions. Almost 1,300 counties across the United States are designated as disaster areas. That means 2012 will be a tough year for America's farmers and ranchers. Not only is the heat choking major commodity and food crops like wheat, corn, and soybeans, it is also disrupting forage and feed supplies, forcing ranchers to either purchase feed at rising prices, or sell off their herds.

The impact of the drought is not limited to farmers and ranchers. Rural America, which thrives on the stability of American agriculture, will also bear the brunt of the economic impact of the drought with reduced consumer demand and lower tax receipts. Severe fire and drought affect families and communities across the nation, and they don't wait for Congress to act. So we must move quickly to pass disaster assistance that will cover farmers and ranchers this year.

Now more than ever we must acknowledge the historical policies underpinning domestic agricultural policy. Our farmers and ranchers help bring in over \$100 billion a year that helps support our economy, and agriculture supports 16 million domestic jobs here at home. And thanks in part to the risk management tools provided by the Farm Bill through crop insurance and standing disaster programs, producers have been able to weather catastrophic events and stay in production the next year to keep growing the food that feeds our families.

A gap in disaster coverage for 2012 – one of the worst disaster years in a generation or more – risks compromising the economic and social stability provided by American agriculture. That's why it is imperative that we pass disaster coverage retroactive for 2012 losses.

Last week we introduced a bill to provide a one-year extension of the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments Program, Livestock Forage Program, Livestock Indemnity Program, Tree Assistance Program, and Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-raised Fish Program. This bill will make sure America's producers have the support they need in this nation-wide catastrophic event.

With the Farm Bill stalled in the House, this may be our only chance to mitigate the impact of the 2012 drought. We urge you to work with us for swift action on our bill in the Senate.

Sincerely,



Senator Max Baucus



Senator Jon Tester



Senator Tim Johnson



Senator Kent Conrad