

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2602

May 25, 2011

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The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
US Department of Agriculture
1400 independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20050-0002

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

I am writing to urge the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to take steps immediately to support the disaster recovery effort underway in Montana and to be prepared to provide additional support in the event of a Presidential or Secretarial Disaster declaration. Flooding has had devastating effects on eastern Montana communities, and I call on the USDA to do all that it can to help ensure the immediate well-being of those affected. I also call on the USDA to help mitigate the damage to Montana's agricultural industry. Because agriculture is the largest employer in Montana, the economic consequences of the floods are a pressing concern.

Nineteen counties in Montana have issued emergency declarations as well as the Crow Indian Reservation, and earlier this week Governor Schweitzer declared a state of emergency statewide in Montana.

I ask that you deploy all available emergency and disaster resources within your authority to assist producers in mitigating their losses and keeping them operational long after the flood waters have recinded.

Additionally, should the Governor of Montana request a Secretarial disaster declaration, I urge you to expeditiously review the request to ensure producers in the affected areas are able to access the Emergency Loan Program within USDA.

It is essential that USDA provides producers with quick assistance in response to these floods. I appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to working with you to assist Montana's farmers and ranchers during this difficult time.

Sincerely,



Max Baucus
U.S. Senator