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March 16, 2018

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

Dear Secretary Perdue:

Thank you for your recent designation of 24 Kansas counties as primary natural disaster areas due to drought. As you know, this declaration makes farm operators in the affected counties, and contiguous counties, eligible for much needed assistance from the Farm Service Agency (FSA), including emergency loans.

Unfortunately, Kansas has now experienced two consecutive seasons of wildfire and drought. This year, Kansas continues to suffer through a severe drought, as 57 counties across the state have already been designated D2 (severe) or D3 (extreme) drought levels, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor, which tracks droughts across the country. Due to these extreme conditions facing the state, Kansas Governor Jeff Colyer signed a drought declaration on March 15, 2018, for all 105 counties in the state, in order to provide assistance to farmers and ranchers coping with the impact of the drought as they raise crops and livestock.

In addition to his declaration, Governor Colyer also requested that the Kansas State Executive Director of the FSA, and county executive directors, urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to consider permitting the use of acres enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) for emergency haying and grazing. Prompt consideration of this request is necessary since the primary nesting period in Kansas begins on April 15th, and during that time certain practices related to maintenance, haying, and grazing on CRP land are restricted.

Further, USDA should consider any additional requests, particularly those that have garnered local consensus, on appropriate flexibilities for conservation practices eligible for emergency grazing and other conservation program flexibilities that can be utilized in response to devastating drought conditions. We appreciate the support that USDA has provided to drought and wildfires in recent years, including the Ashland, Anderson Creek, and Starbuck fires that devastated communities in western Kansas, and we urge the Department to employ any program and contract flexibilities that will result in timely, deliverable assistance to producers during this critical time.

With every best wish.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Pat Roberts", written over a horizontal line.

Chairman Pat Roberts
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition and Forestry

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jerry Moran", written over a horizontal line.

Senator Jerry Moran

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Roger W. Marshall", written over a horizontal line.

Congressman Roger Marshall