

September 1, 2021

The Honorable David Scott  
Chairman  
House Committee on Agriculture  
United States House of Representative  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Scott:

The stability of U.S. farms and ranches relies on their ability to be resilient under an array of unpredictable weather conditions. And when a disaster strikes, getting help to farmers quickly can make the difference between a farmer filing for bankruptcy and holding onto the farm in hopes of passing it on to the next generation.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported 2020 shattered a previous annual record of 16 individual billion-dollar weather events with 22. From massive hurricanes on the Gulf Coast to fast spreading wildfires in the West, almost all agricultural product types were impacted. Given the diversity of American agriculture, the severity of 2020's disaster season exposed gaps in the farm safety net, leaving many producers on the sidelines. Already in 2021, farmers and ranchers have been hit with severe winter storms, extreme drought and record flooding.

Supplemental and ad hoc programs designed to assist farmers and ranchers were particularly important in 2020 to counter unprecedented impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic with USDA working with grower organizations to fill in gaps where assistance was not reaching producers in need. However, the preferred mechanism for managing risk associated with disasters for most agricultural producers has been federal crop insurance programs as it provides predictability even in times of uncertainty.

Crop insurance is a linchpin of the farm safety net and is crucial to the economic and food and fiber security of urban and rural America. The program provides predictable, on-budget assistance to farmers in a way that helps lenders continue to support America's farmers and ranchers. No other piece of the farm safety net can provide this reassurance to lenders.

The crop insurance program provides a dependable risk management tool for a wide variety of crops and farmers of all sizes. More than one million crop insurance policies protect 90 percent of farmland and covers more than 100 crops. But despite these successes of the program, gaps in the safety net remain.

The undersigned organizations are committed to working with you and the Agriculture Committee to address these gaps through improvements to crop insurance and additional funding for disaster programs where crop insurance is not the appropriate tool for assistance. Any work on disaster assistance must make certain that any program put forward doesn't undercut crop insurance's effectiveness or discourage participation in the program.

We look forward to working with you as the committee takes a comprehensive look into the ground level implementation and challenges farmers and ranchers face when dealing with a disaster. Together we can improve the future effectiveness of crop insurance and disaster assistance programs while ensuring a more stable farm economy and secure domestic food supply.

Sincerely,

American Farm Bureau Federation  
Agricultural Retailers Association  
American Soybean Association  
Crop Life America  
Farm Credit Council  
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture  
National Association of Wheat Growers  
National Corn Growers Association  
National Grain and Feed Association