

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 11, 2017

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We appreciate your prompt efforts to address the recent devastating flooding that has severely impacted the operations of hundreds of farmers in Eastern Arkansas. On your recent visit to Arkansas, you witnessed firsthand the damage the flooding has wrought on rural communities and the challenges that lie ahead for Arkansas farmers.

According to the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, losses to the rice crop that resulted from flooding is projected to be anywhere from 100,000 to 300,000 acres. Financial losses from the flooding are currently estimated to be a minimum of \$64.5 million. Unfortunately, 89 percent of the rice crop has already been planted, so a significant amount of input costs have already been expended for the current crop year. To make matters worse, new "ability to replant" regulations promulgated by the Risk Management Agency (RMA) compounds the problem because they require farmers to replant rice through the final day of the Late Planting Period (LPP) – that is June 10, or 15 days after the Final Plant Date (FPD). Unfortunately, this date is unrealistic because replanting until the middle of June essentially guarantees steep yield losses that will result in excess financial hardship for most growers.

In order to mitigate the financial impact of the "ability to replant" provisions, we request urgent action by USDA to provide flexibility in the enforcement of these regulations. Specifically, we request a county-by-county approach for the required replanting window that takes into account the growing conditions that producers individually face, instead of imposing a one-size-fits-all standard. Secondly, in determining whether or not it is "practical to replant," we request USDA demonstrate considerable deference to producers regarding the factors and circumstances that impact the viability of replanting on their individual operations.

Finally, we request expeditious action in making a disaster designation for individual counties impacted by the flooding so that producers can quickly access Emergency Loans and individual assistance that USDA can make available to them.

We appreciate your understanding the urgency of this matter and thank you for your prompt attention to our request.

Sincerely,



U.S. Senator John Boozman



U.S. Senator Tom Cotton



U.S. Representative Rick Crawford



U.S. Representative French Hill



U.S. Representative Steve Womack



U.S. Representative Bruce Westerman

cc:

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