

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 2, 2012

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Roberts,

This summer has produced some of the worst droughts and wildfires this country has ever seen. Recently, extreme droughts have gripped roughly 80 percent of the nation leading to a U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretarial Natural Disaster Declaration in more than 1,000 counties, in 26 states. Additionally, several states have experienced the largest wildfires in decades, destroying millions of acres of rangeland and forests.

Yet, in a year when farmers and ranchers are reeling from these disastrous conditions, the disaster relief programs that would provide essential assistance to farmer and ranchers have lapsed. This is unacceptable.

We applaud your bipartisan leadership to reauthorize crucial disaster relief programs in the Senate-passed Farm Bill. Passage of the Farm Bill would ensure that disaster relief programs are not only available this year, but would also provide certainty to all that depend on these programs for years to come.

Undoubtedly, the best solution to assist our farmers and ranchers would be for Congress to pass a Farm Bill that includes funding for these disaster programs. However, because the House has not yet taken up the Senate Farm Bill, or passed their own Farm Bill, opportunities to fund these programs this year are slipping away. Farmers and ranchers cannot afford to gamble their livelihoods on the success or failure of brinkmanship here in Congress—they need the assurance that this will get done.

Without these key disaster relief programs, farmers and ranchers who have lost crops and livestock this year are left with few options. We ask for your support for passage of these disaster relief programs on the fastest timeline possible, and in no case later than the end of September. We look forward to working with you in this effort.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Claire McCaskill
United States Senator