

# United States Senate

September 29, 2020

Administrator Richard Fordyce  
Farm Service Agency  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independent Ave., SW  
Washington, D.C. 20228

Administrator Fordyce:

I am reaching out today regarding the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus (WHIP+), and its impact on Montana farmers. I am troubled that nearly a year after the Senate expanded WHIP+ to provide support to farmers impacted by quality loss, drought, and excessive moisture, Montana producers are still waiting for payments.

In 2019, Eastern Montana farmers faced unprecedented moisture during both planting and harvest seasons, resulting in devastating crop and quality losses. For months, I urged USDA to use the authority provided within the *Additional Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Act of 2019* (H.R. 2157) to extend support to these producers. Again and again, USDA denied that request. So when the Senate passed the Fiscal Year 2020 appropriations package, I fought to expand the WHIP+ statutory authorization to include crops impacted by quality loss, drought, and excessive moisture, and to provide \$1.5 billion in funding to cover the new categories. That's why it is absolutely unacceptable that nearly a year after securing this fix, I am hearing from Montana farmers that they are still waiting for payments. As such, I expect an answer to the following questions as soon as possible:

- How much of the FY20 additional \$1.5 billion has been distributed to farmers across the U.S.?
- Specifically, how much funding has been directed to Montana farmers?
- What hurdles are delaying WHIP+ payments for the 2019 crop year?
- What is the latest date that Montana farmers should expect payments from the WHIP+ program related to 2019 quality loss, excessive moisture, or drought?

I am disappointed in Farm Service Agency's inability to administer this program as Congress intended, and deliver WHIP+ payments to producers impacted by excessive moisture. I look forward to receiving your action plan as to how FSA can correct this situation for Montana farmers, and ensure that going forward WHIP+ does not experience a one-year delay before paying producers. I appreciate your time and attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester