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United States Senate

June 30, 2021

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

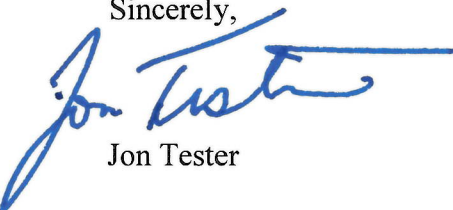
Dear Secretary Vilsack:

I write regarding the rapidly deteriorating grazing conditions in Montana and importance of taking action to support producers in areas affected by drought conditions. This week, Montana is experiencing another round of extremely high temperatures that will likely break records across the state. While we must ultimately address broader issues driving these conditions, producers are experiencing emergency conditions and need relief today. That's why I urge you to immediately use your authority to allow for emergency haying and grazing on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands.

I am also hearing from Montana producers that a new Farm Service Agency policy that requires emergency haying or grazing to be completed within 60 days of when a county was declared to be in emergency drought status could potentially be in conflict with an order to allow emergency practices on CRP. I ask that you please make sure that this 60 day rule would not prohibit a producer from haying or grazing on CRP lands as the Department responds to these extraordinary conditions.

The Conservation Reserve Program is critically important to wildlife habitat and erosion protection, however, this extreme situation requires all possible solutions to be on the table and all agencies to cooperate to provide relief as soon as possible. I appreciate your commitment to producers and stand ready to work with you to address this crisis.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester