

# United States Senate

December 2, 2019

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

Secretary Perdue:

I write today to express my disappointment in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) response to the farmers in crisis in Northeast Montana. USDA's failure to act may be the tipping point for some Montana family farmers.

Producers in the area have faced unprecedented weather challenges this growing season. Spring flooding delayed planting, and excessive fall moisture stalled harvest. Many folks were unable to harvest their crop this fall due to the excessive moisture and now winter is here. Despite these challenging circumstances, the Northeast Montana farming community continues to exemplify the resilience of the American farmer, as neighbors help neighbors, and the community bands together to lift each other up. Their actions make me proud to be a Montana farmer.

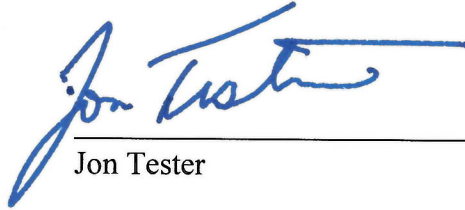
However, community can only take these folks so far. These farmers are facing a dire financial situation as the year wraps up, which is why I am extremely disappointed in your decision to exclude Montana farmers from the WHIP+ program for quality loss related to excessive moisture. In a time of extreme market volatility and trade uncertainty, USDA's mission is to "mitigate the significant risks of farming." In Northeast Montana, USDA is failing to deliver that objective for struggling farmers.

I now urge you to take a closer look at the new challenge farmers are facing – snow. In the last two weeks, Northeast Montana received more than a foot of heavy, wet snow. This closed roads, and effectively ended harvest 2019. The only silver lining of this end to a harrowing harvest is now USDA is able to offer WHIP+ disaster payments to these farmers. The *Additional Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Act of 2019* (H.R. 2157) extends the WHIP+ program to expenses related to losses of crops as a consequence of "hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, typhoons, volcanic activity, snowstorms, and wildfires."

The language in this bill could not be clearer, and as such I urge you to act on it immediately and extend WHIP+ assistance to these producers. Northeast Montana farmers have been through the mill this harvest season, and now you have the opportunity to offer them some

security and certainty going into 2020. If you have any questions about the circumstances these farmers are facing, please do not hesitate to follow up with me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jon Tester", is written above a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and cursive.

Jon Tester