

# United States Senate

February 3, 2020

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 appreciation for your work expanding the Wildfire Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus (WHIP+) to both sugarbeet and wheat producers who faced crop quality losses in the 2019 growing season. These disaster payments will bring much-needed relief to farmers in Eastern Montana. I urge you to swiftly determine criteria and payment rates for these growers to bring them some certainty for the 2020 growing season.

Last year, Eastern Montana producers faced remarkable weather challenges. Excessive moisture and snow impacted the quality of grain and beets, and eventually halted harvest altogether. Some producers were left with a crop in the ground, while others were left with products that had extremely low sugar or protein content. Revenue from these crops shrank, pushing folks closer to going broke every day.

That's why I was pleased that Congress passed the *Further Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2020*, which expands WHIP+ to include quality loss, drought, and excessive moisture, and increases funding for the program by \$1.5 billion to cover the new categories. This fix clears the way for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to issue an emergency declaration and provide assistance to Montana sugarbeet and wheat farmers.

Now that Congress has paved the way for USDA to provide aid, I ask that you quickly implement the new provisions of WHIP+. President Trump signed the funding bill into law more than a month ago, and as of today, you have granted more than a dozen Montana counties emergency declarations related to excessive moisture and snow. Yet, I am hearing from sugar and wheat producers in Montana that they are no closer to receiving a disaster payment. As farmers and lenders evaluate finances and credit opportunities for the 2020 growing season, WHIP+ will play an important part in balancing the books.

I appreciate your attention to this issue. I stand ready to work together to bring farmers in Eastern Montana the certainty they deserve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jon Tester". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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Jon Tester