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United States Senate

May 19, 2021

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

Secretary Vilsack:

I write to express my concerns about the weather conditions affecting producers in eastern Montana year after year. This spring, many farmers and ranchers in Montana are experiencing severe drought conditions. Many of these same farmers and ranchers also experienced excessive moisture to the tune of 150 percent of normal rainfall just two years ago. Extreme weather continues to be an issue for producers, and I urge you to coordinate with the State of Montana to get producers the resources they need to get through these crises.

The USDA recently designated 13 Montana counties as natural disaster areas due to drought. These counties are suffering from drought intensity values of either D2 Drought-Severe for 8 or more consecutive weeks, D3 Drought-Extreme, or D4 Drought-Exceptional. These conditions make it extremely difficult for farmers and ranchers facing challenging circumstances that strain them emotionally, physically, and financially.

I appreciate the attention the Biden Administration is bringing to this issue by creating a Drought Relief Working Group within the National Climate Task Force. I look forward to the working group's recommendations and ask that you work with urgency as this situation is dire for many Montana producers.

With continually changing conditions in the forecast moving forward, it will be important for the USDA and the State of Montana to coordinate to support the needs of producers. I urge you to closely monitor this situation and find workable solutions for Montana's producers. Please do not hesitate to follow up with me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester

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