

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 27, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins,

Congress passed an expansive emergency supplemental in December, which included more than \$23 billion to assist farmers, ranchers and rural Americans in responding to devastating natural disasters in 2023 and 2024. We write to urge you to distribute these funds expeditiously and in consultation with Congress. This assistance is crucial as our Nation's farmers and ranchers are struggling to respond to several billion-dollar natural disasters around the country while preparing for planting in a challenging farm economy.

These funds will benefit producers in every State—the natural disasters that struck farms and ranches in 2023 and 2024 affected a wide range of crops, livestock, and on-farm infrastructure. In North Carolina, Hurricane Helene is estimated to have caused almost \$5 billion in agricultural losses, and in New Hampshire, a disastrous freeze in 2023 damaged apple and peach trees, as well as other crops, with growers seeing as high as 100 percent crop losses for the year. The department must move swiftly and thoughtfully to implement a program that will support farms of varying size and production.

As you know, this program is intended to serve both producers with and without crop insurance, and reach small, diversified operations. The supplemental provides targeted funds for small farm states, and it also specifically directs the Secretary to offer technical assistance to interested non-insured producers to help them apply for funding made available.

Rural communities are also struggling to recover from natural disasters, and we urge you to prioritize distributing the \$362 million appropriated for the Rural Development Disaster Assistance Fund, the first time this fund has received a direct appropriation. While we recognize it will take some time to implement a new program, Congress chose to utilize this fund to allow Rural Development to be nimble and provide specialized assistance to assist communities where they need it most. The department should work with all Rural Development State Offices to catalogue disaster needs and develop a fair allocation of available funds.

As the Department implements all of the disaster assistance programs, we stand ready to assist you in this effort to advance our shared priority of helping farmers and rural communities recover and thrive. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator
Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations



Thom Tillis
United States Senator