



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-4100

February 5, 2014

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Secretary Vilsack,

After years of deliberation, both the House and Senate recently passed the Agricultural Act of 2014. In just a few days, President Obama is expected to sign it into law. As you begin the implementation phase of the Farm Bill, it is important to prioritize implementation of programs where timing is especially critical.

In the summer of 2012, drought and dry weather conditions hit the livestock industry across the country, including in South Dakota. This led to higher feed costs, little or poor pastureland, and ultimately declining cattle herds. Ranchers across the west worked hard to rebuild their herds to weather the drought.

Then in October 2013, Winter Storm Atlas suddenly hit southwest South Dakota with 70 mile per hour winds, zero visibility, and some places seeing almost 4 feet of snow in just 2 days. Ranchers in South Dakota lost tens of thousands of livestock practically overnight. After the storm, I encouraged ranchers to document losses in expectation of passage of a Farm Bill and livestock disaster programs.

Fortunately, the newly passed Farm Bill reauthorizes the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP), the Livestock Forage Program (LFP) and the Emergency Livestock Assistance Program (ELAP). It also includes retroactive assistance for those ranchers who suffered weather disasters in 2012 and 2013.

These ranchers are now waiting on the U.S. Department of Agriculture to provide these much-needed disaster payments. I urge you to prioritize these livestock disaster programs and implement these programs as soon as possible so that ranchers can recover from these recent disasters. This is an urgent situation, and it deserves an urgent response.

Thank you for immediate attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Kristi Noem  
Member of Congress