

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 25, 2012

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

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We are writing to request that you consider assisting drought stricken counties throughout Colorado. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) should consider allowing Colorado farmers and ranchers to utilize Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) acres for livestock grazing. Ranchers are already beginning to sell off their herd in parts of Colorado because of the lack of hay.

Conditions today are comparable to 2002 in Colorado, when the agricultural community was economically devastated by severe drought. USDA has the ability to offer a Secretarial Disaster Designation and the ability to open CRP and CREP land for emergency grazing. Farmers and ranchers throughout Colorado need additional acreage to keep their livestock healthy and viable for future production and sale.

At the present time, counties are not eligible for emergency grazing until after July 15th, and they must also be designated D2 status for drought. It is imperative that you do not hesitate in making a decision as many in Colorado cannot afford a delay. Should we wait until July 15th, there is an increased likelihood that inadequate hay will be available for feed and minimal land will be available for grazing. If CRP and CREP lands are not permitted for emergency grazing, the economic consequences could be devastating.

Your consideration is appreciated and we look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Cory Gardner
Member of Congress (CO-04)



Scott Tipton
Member of Congress (CO-03)

cc: The Honorable John Hickenlooper, Governor, State of Colorado