

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 23, 2012

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

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

On behalf of Colorado farmers and ranchers, we ask you to extend the ability to utilize Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres for haying and livestock grazing. While the farmers and ranchers we represent are thankful for the assistance they have received, they are concerned that a gap could occur before they can utilize fall forage.

The initial emergency authorization you provided in June of this year has been very beneficial for our constituents. Many counties in Colorado are currently benefiting from the ability to utilize CRP land for emergency haying and grazing. However, because these counties are still suffering from severe drought which has lasted exceptionally longer than any drought in Colorado's recent history, we ask that you extend emergency grazing and haying through November 30, 2012.

An extension would carry Colorado cattlemen through the corn harvest. Until corn, corn stalks, and wheat grass are available for feed, cattle need to be able to graze on CRP land. If this does not occur, many ranchers who have been able to withstand the drought thus far will be forced to sell their livestock in the final days before fall and winter feeds are available. Sadly, we have already seen some do so.

The federal response should reflect the length and gravity of this drought. Without a swift response from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the devastation caused by the drought will only get worse.

Thank you for your consideration and your prompt reply.

Sincerely,



Cory Gardner
Member of Congress (CO-04)



Scott Tipton
Member of Congress (CO-03)