



STATE OF MICHIGAN
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

GARLIN GILCHRIST II
LT. GOVERNOR

June 19, 2019

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

I write on behalf of Michigan farmers who are facing extraordinary challenges at this moment. As you are no doubt aware, Michigan has experienced one of the wettest periods on record, which has oversaturated topsoil and prevented many farmers from preparing and planting their fields. This historic rain, coupled with extreme cold, excessive snow, flash flooding, and tornadoes, has prompted 64 counties to already request disaster designations from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) this year alone. As Governor, I now request a USDA Secretarial Disaster Designation for the entire state of Michigan, as well as added flexibility under the Federal Crop Insurance Program and the recent disaster legislation, so that all possible assistance is available to the hard-working farmers in my state.

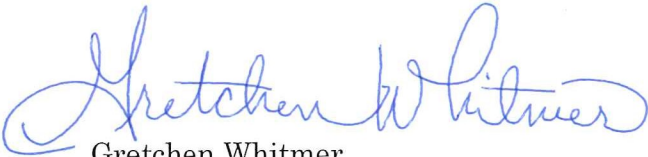
The conditions Michigan farmers face are extraordinary. According to the National Centers for Environmental Information, Michigan received 37.9 inches of rain between May 1, 2018 and April 30, 2019, making it the third wettest year in our history. This excessive rain has posed exceptional challenges and has delayed or prevented Michigan farmers from planting their crops or harvesting their hay crops. In fact, Michigan had just 3.5 days suitable for field work as of June 9, according to the most recent USDA Crop Progress Report. In addition to the prevented and late planting, many of our livestock producers have been unable to harvest the hay they need to sustain them through next winter. In many cases, they have lost one or even two complete cuttings, which is exacerbated by the low hay stocks coming into the year. In addition to these extreme weather conditions, Michigan farmers' planting decisions have been complicated by ongoing trade disputes.

Together, these challenging conditions have resulted in record-low planting across the state. The latest USDA Crop Progress Report shows that only 63 percent of Michigan's corn was planted as of June 9, down from 88 percent on the same date last year, with soybeans even lower at only 43 percent planted. To salvage as much as possible from this planting season, I ask that USDA provide increased flexibility under Federal Crop Insurance rules to allow farmers to plant or switch to forage or cover crops on prevented plant acres and to allow them to graze or harvest those crops for hay or silage early enough in the year so they still have high nutritional value.

Finally, Congress recently provided over \$3 billion for agricultural disaster assistance that includes flooding in 2019. As you finalize the funding requirements for this assistance, I encourage you to consider any excessive moisture or ponding as eligible rather than only covering river or stream flooding.

Thank you for considering my request for a Disaster Designation for all Michigan counties and for additional flexibility under the Federal Crop Insurance Program and the recent disaster assistance legislation. I look forward to working together to support Michigan farmers during this difficult time. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,



Gretchen Whitmer
Governor