

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 30, 2018

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Lowey:

We are writing as Chairman and Ranking Member of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture regarding the series of natural disasters in 2018 that have caused widespread destruction and significant losses for our nation's farmers and the communities in which they live. Unfortunately, many producers suffered near 100 percent crop losses. There is an urgent need for a supplemental disaster appropriations bill to deal with these disasters and to help our farmers, ranchers and rural communities recover and rebuild.

On October 10, 2018, Hurricane Michael, one of the most powerful storms to make landfall in the United States, left a path of devastation from Florida to Virginia. While the damage is still being assessed, it is estimated that total agricultural losses could exceed \$4 billion. Less than a month earlier, Hurricane Florence slammed into North Carolina and South Carolina causing \$22 billion in damages. In addition, wildfires across the western states have consumed more than 8 million acres to date. While there is never a good time for a storm like Michael, it hit at the worst time possible for farmers. With depressed commodity prices and markets closed due to retaliatory trade measures, it made the hurricane's impact even greater.

The losses are staggering. In North Carolina, Hurricane Florence killed more than 5,500 pigs and 3.4 million chickens. Several lagoons responsible for containing animal waste were breached and are in need of repair.

Similarly, in Georgia, Hurricane Michael destroyed 97 chicken houses and killed more than 2 million chickens. Hurricane Michael also devastated the Georgia cotton crop, which was nearing peak harvest and was on track to be the best season in years. Cotton losses in Georgia are estimated to be between \$550 and \$600 million. For the third straight year, hurricane damage also caused significant losses to the pecan crop, both in trees and nuts in Georgia. Peanuts, vegetables, landscaping, and agritourism were hit hard as well.

In Alabama, Michael also did hundreds of millions of dollars in agricultural damage. Particularly hard hit were cotton, peanuts, timber, pecans and livestock and specialty crops. There is also a great deal of damage to farm infrastructure.

In California, where wildfires raged for a second consecutive year, farmers and ranchers suffered losses to their vineyards, fruit crop, rangeland, and beehives.

Specifically, there is a vital need to address timber losses. In Florida, Georgia and Alabama, the timber industry has suffered what has been called "generational" damage to tens of thousands of acres of timberland. Western states lost thousands of acres of timberland to wildfires. These losses are unimaginable; however, the industry has little recourse.

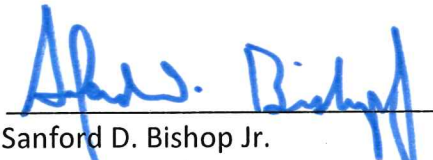
After viewing the destruction of Hurricane Michael, Vice President Pence said, "Our administration will continue unrelentingly to deploy the man power and resources of the federal government to this region and to these communities until [they] come all the way back." U.S. Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue said, "Having seen firsthand some of the catastrophic damage from Hurricane Michael, I know that farmers will need all the help they can get to recover." We support this call to action to help those impacted by Hurricane Michael and other natural disasters this year.

It is our responsibility, and the responsibility of the other Members of Congress, to find solutions and provide relief to those in need. We look forward to working with you, and the full House Appropriations Committee, as well as the entire Congress on a supplemental appropriations package and to reexamine federal policies where necessary.

Sincerely,



Robert B. Aderholt
Chairman, House Appropriations
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug Administration,
and Related Agencies



Sanford D. Bishop Jr.
Ranking Member, House Appropriations
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug Administration
and Related Agencies