

May 3, 2024

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

As you know, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) announced in an Agricultural Statistics Board (ASB) Notice dated April 9, 2024, that it was cancelling the July Cattle report and discontinuing the Cotton Objective Yield Survey and all County Estimates for Crops and Livestock beginning in the 2024 production year. We write to express our concern about this outcome and ask you to reverse this decision.

The reports slated for discontinuation are highly valuable to the entire U.S. agricultural sector, and particularly for cattle, cotton, and grain. For example, the July Cattle report offers producers and market analysts key insights into herd size, calf crop, and heifer retention, all of which are paramount to making sound business and marketing decisions. Relatedly, the reports offer a great deal of transparency and market anticipation for the entire agricultural sector.

As you know, NASS previously attempted to suspend this report in 2016, but reversed course after receiving feedback from industry and academia opposed to the decision. Losing access to this report in 2016 would have sparked uncertainty in the livestock markets, and the same result would occur today. This would be especially unwelcome given the current period of cyclical herd contraction within the cattle industry.

The objective yield survey provides data for monthly pre-harvest forecasts and end-of-season estimates of planted and harvested acres, yield, and production of upland cotton. This survey reduces uncertainty associated with NASS production estimates which allows markets and price discovery to function more efficiently. Although early season cotton production estimates are always subject to change based on future weather conditions, having robust estimates based on objective field measurements from August through December serves to facilitate cotton trading. Going forward, the lack of reliable estimates from an unbiased source such as NASS may reduce the ability of industry participants (both buyers and sellers) to engage in forward contracting until later in the season.

Similarly, the County Estimates for Crops and Livestock is a highly valuable dataset which is not only used for market projection, but also to estimate economic impact and losses associated with natural disasters. This information has most recently been used to better understand the devastation caused by the droughts which affected so much of the country last year, and the Smokehouse Creek Fire that burned through the Texas Panhandle and western Oklahoma.

The ASB identified budgetary constraints as justification for the decision to discontinue publication of these reports. While we recognize that NASS has seen a modest year-over-year appropriations reduction, we hold that the costs to industry will be more adverse than the cost-savings NASS may realize through cessation of these reports.

We ask that you work with Congress and industry stakeholders to seek alternative means of cost cutting and urge the continued publication of the July Cattle report, Cotton Objective Yield Survey, and County Estimates for Crops and Livestock.

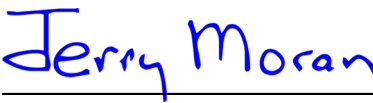
Sincerely,



Tracey Mann
Member of Congress
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry
House Agriculture Committee



Jim Costa
Member of Congress



Jerry Moran
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



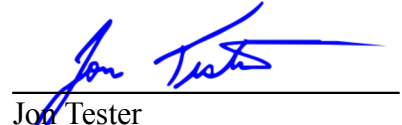
Frank D. Lucas
Member of Congress



Ed Case
Member of Congress



Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator



Jon Tester
United States Senator



Michael T. McCaul
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Mike Crapo
United States Senator



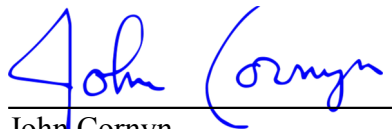
Tina Smith
United States Senator



Adrian Smith
Member of Congress



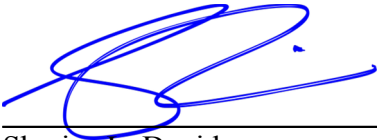
Colin Z. Allred
Member of Congress



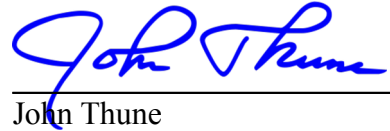
John Cornyn
United States Senator



Eric A. "Rick" Crawford
Member of Congress



Sharice L. Davids
Member of Congress



John Thune
United States Senator



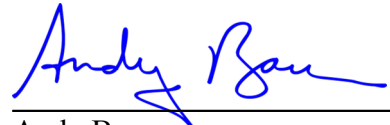
Steve Womack
Member of Congress



Dean Phillips
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James E. Risch
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Andy Barr
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Yadira Caraveo, M.D.
Member of Congress



Deb Fischer
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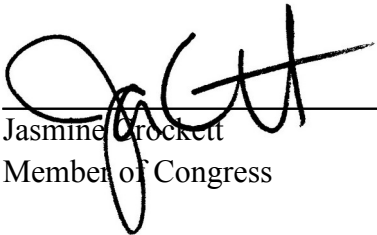
Donald G. Davis
Member of Congress



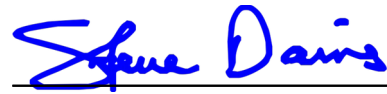
James Lankford
United States Senator



Rick W. Allen
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



Steve Daines
United States Senator



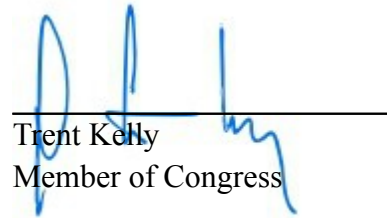
Bruce Westerman
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Jim Tokuda
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Thom Tillis
United States Senator



Trent Kelly
Member of Congress



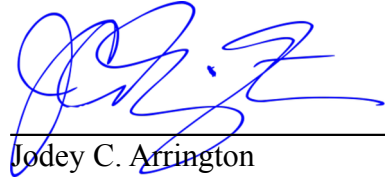
Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator



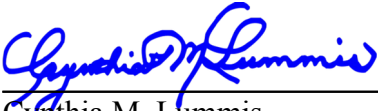
David G. Valadao
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Kevin Cramer
United States Senator



Jodey C. Arrington
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Cynthia M. Lummis
United States Senator



Don Bacon
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Bill Hagerty
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David Kustoff
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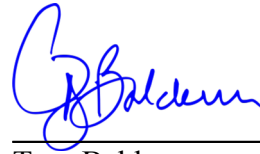
Tommy Tuberville
United States Senator



Ralph Norman
Member of Congress



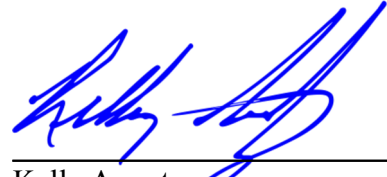
Ted Budd
United States Senator



Troy Balderson
Member of Congress



Pete Ricketts
United States Senator



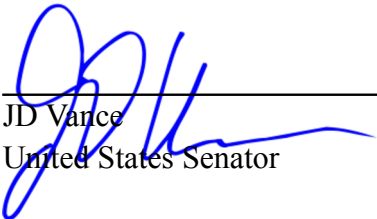
Kelly Armstrong
Member of Congress



Cindy Hyde-Smith
United States Senator



James Comer
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JD Vance
United States Senator



Ben Cline
Member of Congress



Dusty Johnson
Member of Congress



John Rose
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Randy Feenstra
Member of Congress



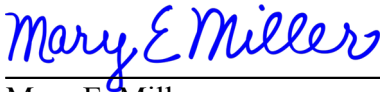
Ashley Hinson
Member of Congress



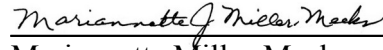
Ronny L. Jackson
Member of Congress



Jake LaTurner
Member of Congress



Mary E. Miller
Member of Congress



Mariannette Miller-Meeks,
M.D.
Member of Congress



August Pfluger
Member of Congress



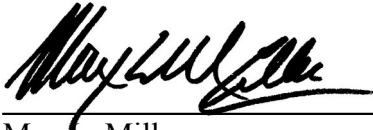
Mike Carey
Member of Congress



Mike Flood
Member of Congress



Brad Finstad
Member of Congress



Max L. Miller
Member of Congress



Jake Ellzey
Member of Congress



Mark Alford
Member of Congress



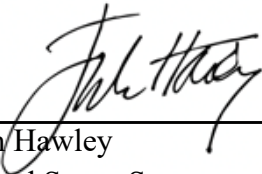
Russell Fry
Member of Congress



M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator



Mike Braun
United States Senator



Josh Hawley
United States Senator