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June 25, 2008

The Honorable Ed Schafer  
Secretary  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Schafer:

I write to request your immediate assistance and that of your agency in mitigating the harmful effects of severe drought conditions in southeast Colorado.

As you know, southeast Colorado has received approximately three inches of rain in the past fifteen months, which is only 19 percent of normal precipitation levels. As a result, farmers and ranchers in these communities are contending with significant shortages of native pasture needed for the haying and grazing of cattle, and are being forced to reduce their herds accordingly. They are fast running out of options that will allow them to continue their operations.

Therefore, I urge you to provide immediate access to Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage in the affected counties of Baca, Prowers, Kiowa, and Bent for emergency haying and grazing. I share the view of Governor Ritter and officials from the Colorado Department of Agriculture and the Colorado Division of Wildlife that doing so will provide much-needed relief to our farmers and ranchers. In the process, I encourage all involved parties to ensure haying and grazing on these lands accords with sound environmental practices.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and for the important work you do on behalf of Colorado's agricultural community.

Sincerely,



Ken Salazar  
United States Senator