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July 28, 2008

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

Dear Secretary Schafer:

The severe, ongoing drought continues to hit Colorado and has brought terrible consequences for many hardworking farmers and ranchers. This year, precipitation is 81 percent below normal in some parts of southeastern Colorado, creating nearly impossible farming and ranching conditions for producers. I write today to ask that you help aid southeastern Colorado in its time of need.

While I am pleased that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has approved emergency haying and grazing for several counties in southeastern Colorado, more help is desperately needed, especially in areas where soil moisture is as low as 40 percent of normal. In addition, native pasture has been substantially reduced, and losses to forage production have reached 100 percent in Bent County.

On July 25, 2008, Governor Ritter requested a Secretarial Disaster Designation for 22 Colorado counties where farmers and ranchers have been hit the hardest by this drought. Specifically, Governor Ritter has requested drought disaster designations for the following counties:

Adams	Arapahoe	Baca	Bent	Cheyenne
Crowley	Douglas	Elbert	El Paso	Huerfano
Kit Carson	Kiowa	Las Animas	Logan	Otero
Park	Prowers	Pueblo	Teller	Washington

He also requested Secretarial Disaster Designation for Delta, Fremont, and Pueblo counties, where late spring freezes destroyed crops.

I write today to echo Governor Ritter's call for action and to strongly encourage you to provide disaster designations in these counties. The declaration is an important step in providing relief to Colorado's struggling farmers and ranchers, many of whom risk losing substantial income invested in their operations.

Thank you for your consideration and timely action on this important request.

Sincerely,



Ken Salazar
United States Senator

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