

## Grassley, Harkin Question USDA Announcement on Emergency Haying and Grazing

Written by Grassley Press  
Friday, 06 September 2013 15:21

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WASHINGTON — Senators Chuck Grassley and Tom Harkin today pressed the U.S. Department of Agriculture to extend the time for farmers to take advantage of emergency haying.

In a letter to Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, the senators wrote, “While we are thankful the emergency release of CRP acres was approved, farmers were left with essentially only two days to cut, dry, and bale hay to meet the deadline for the program. That unreasonably short timeframe prevented many farmers from baling any hay under the emergency CRP release. Therefore, these producers did not get the benefit from CRP access that should have helped mitigate the short supply of hay for the upcoming winter.”

Grassley and Harkin added their support for the Conservation Reserve Program, and said it helps to safeguard some of the most environmentally sensitive land, but the unusually dry weather led them to request the extension, especially in light of the short timeframe provided by the Agriculture Department.

Here is a copy of the text of the letter to Vilsack.

September 5, 2013

The Honorable Tom Vilsack

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Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

Over the past few days a good number of Iowa farmers have contacted us concerning the hot dry weather Iowa has been experiencing, how those conditions have been tough on Iowa livestock and forage crops, and their need for access to Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) for haying and grazing. As the former governor of Iowa, you certainly understand the importance of livestock production to our state and share our concern for Iowa livestock producers as they deal with a second year of drought conditions that have severely strained forage supplies.

The most recent U.S. Drought Monitor indicates that large portions of Iowa are classified as either D2, Severe drought, or D1, Moderate drought. Cattle producers tell us they are having difficulty finding an adequate supply of hay, and many of their pastures are too dry to support their herds at this time.

We commend the Farm Service Agency (FSA) for opening up CRP acres in parts of Iowa for emergency haying and grazing in the late afternoon of August 29, but that was only two days before the haying deadline of August 31. While we are thankful the emergency release of CRP acres was approved, farmers were left with essentially only two days to cut, dry, and bale hay to meet the deadline for the program. That unreasonably short timeframe prevented many farmers from baling any hay under the emergency CRP release. Therefore, these producers did not get the benefit from CRP access that should have helped mitigate the short supply of hay for the upcoming winter. CRP is a crucial program that helps safeguard some of our most environmentally sensitive land. It's also key nesting habitat for a variety of bird species. So it's not without careful consideration of many factors that we request you consider extending emergency haying on CRP acres in Iowa.

We appreciate your consideration of our request. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us or our staff.

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Sincerely,

Charles E. Grassley

Tom Harkin