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June 25, 2012

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Secretary Vilsack,

This year has been dry throughout the Midwest. Without significant rainfall, conditions will continue to be difficult for Nebraska's farmers and ranchers. Especially hard hit have been our livestock producers. As of today, Morrill and Sheridan counties have reported drought conditions and precipitation levels are, on average, at least 40 percent below the normal levels for the year. Nearly 5 percent of Nebraska is in severe drought and this is expected to worsen. It is clear that the drought has taken its toll on fields and ranches.

I urge you to promptly consider the Nebraska Farm Service Agency (FSA) Committee's request to authorize emergency haying and grazing of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land in all counties that meet the appropriate drought conditions and to give prompt consideration to future requests. The State FSA Committee has already consulted with the USDA State Technical committee on this matter. This authority can help provide producers another option as they seek to provide adequate hay and forage to their animals.

Thank you for your consideration. If I may be of assistance to you or a member of your staff, please do not hesitate to contact my office at 202-224-4224.

Very truly yours,



Mike Johannis
United States Senator

Cc Juan M. Garcia, Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs, Farm Service Agency

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