United States Department of Agriculture

Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services

Farm Service Agency

Texas State
FSA Office
PO Box 2900
College Station, TX
77841-2900

September 18, 2009

The Honorable Todd Staples
Commissioner
Texas Department of Agriculture
PO Box 12847
Austin, TX 78711

Dear Congressman Staples:

Thank you for you letter of September 9, 2009 requesting the immediate release of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands for emergency grazing and haying.

The denial of the request to implement Emergency CRP haying and grazing provisions for the counties of Texas was based on the lack of adequate justification to support the minimum levels of below normal precipitation throughout the state. Use of CRP acreage for emergency haying or grazing is determined based on the most recent 4 months average precipitation. The established protocols require that a minimum of 40% below the normal 4 month average is the threshold for approval of the relief authorization. This was not the case in all counties of Texas. In review of the US drought monitor these moisture levels can be verified.

The Texas State Committee had been delegated the authority to approve the requests from county identified as at least a D3 or greater drought monitor category. All of these requests that were submitted were approved and the local County Committee authorized the release of the eligible CRP acreage for use under the Emergency CRP Haying and Grazing provisions. This authorization granted use of the CRP acreage until September 30.

The effects of the drought are long lasting and assistance is being obligated through additional programs available to FSA. At the time of the review of the request granting relief to utilize CRP acreage in additional counties did not meet the recognized eligibility standards and therefore this requested assistance was not authorized.

Sincerely,

Juan M. Garcia
Acting State Executive Director

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