TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

TODD STAPLES
COMMISSIONER

January 11, 2011

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

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

The ongoing violence along the Texas-Mexico border poses a serious threat to our country and to border states such as Texas. The safety of Americans is always our top priority, and this tumultuous situation is also creating a substantial threat to Texas' cotton industry and its $4 billion impact on our state.

As the nation's leading cotton producer, Americans have come to depend on our state's cotton supply, and Texas cotton producers have worked very hard in coordination with USDA and the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) to protect this industry from devastation. Our hard-fought collaborative efforts to eradicate boll weevils are well documented and would be boiled down to a devastating loss should the border violence undermine our progress.

As I understand it, the violence is hampering eradication efforts in Mexico as adequate and timely funding has become unreliable and the servicing of boll weevil traps and application of insecticides are in decline. In certain instances, eradication activities in fields on both sides of the border have been delayed indefinitely. If weevils are not controlled in Mexican border states, such as Tamaulipas, these insects can move to Texas and jeopardize the significant investment in boll weevil eradication made by the federal government, the State of Texas and Texas cotton producers.

In an effort to preserve our progress and protect cotton fields on both sides of the border, I encourage USDA to initiate immediate and urgent discussions with Mexican federal authorities regarding their boll weevil eradication strategies and operations. I welcome the opportunity for TDA to be part of such discussions. In order for the Texas boll weevil eradication program to be a success, the insect must be eradicated from the Mexican states bordering Texas.

TDA stands ready to ensure the future availability of cotton for all Americans by protecting the Texas cotton industry and assisting in achieving successful completion of boll weevil eradication. I look forward to working with you to develop an action plan to address this very serious situation and thank you in advance for your leadership on this matter.

Sincerely yours,

Todd Staples

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