

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 30, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Secretary Perdue:

We urge the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to take immediate action in implementing the sugar beet eligibility provisions that were passed in the FY20 Appropriations bill as a part of the Wildfire, Hurricane, and Indemnity Program Plus (WHIP+). Since its inception, this program has been essential for farmers during adverse weather growing seasons. Currently, USDA's swift action is necessary for Western Sugar Cooperative's (the Cooperative) farmers in order to obtain operating loans for the 2020 crop in the next thirty days.

The past two years have been devastating for Cooperative farmers working in Colorado, Montana, Nebraska and Wyoming due to significant weather events. In 2018 and 2019, growing regions across these states experienced freezing temperatures in early October before sugar beets are typically harvested. The Cooperative farmers took all necessary steps to harvest their sugar beets to keep the Cooperative viable and deliver sugar to their customers. However, frozen beets are more expensive to process and produce less sugar. Because farmer shareholders directly cover these costs, they threaten their immediate future to farm and the viability of their Cooperative.

Given normal conditions, the Cooperative farmers are some of the most productive and sustainable across the globe. The difficulty from the recent significant weather events have forced the farmers to not be able to overcome these devastating circumstances on their own.

Last year, Congress modified the WHIP+ payment program, which now provides the necessary path forward for the Cooperative, by capturing both quantity and quality losses that have severely impacted the sugar beet farmers. The current proposed formula for the sugar beet cooperatives captures both quantity and quality losses. With the farmers making up the cooperative, they bear all these significant impacts from the field to the sugar produced.

We want to emphasize how important a timely notice of your intended approach on this program is due to the fact that a great number of farmers and lenders are awaiting a decision which will undoubtedly affect the availability of credit. We respectfully request that you expedite the process to ensure that it is effective and timely.

Thank you for your diligent efforts in putting this program together. Please do not hesitate to contact our offices if we can be of assistance.

We greatly appreciate all that you and the dedicated staff at the USDA do for American farmers, ranchers, and rural America.

Sincerely,



Cory Gardner  
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



Michael B. Enzi  
United States Senator



John Barrasso, M.D.  
United States Senator



Deb Fischer  
United States Senator



Ben Sasse  
United States Senator



Steve Daines  
United States Senator



Jon Tester  
United States Senator