

November 17, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

Considering the overwhelming concerns we have heard from our producers across the country, the undersigned organizations urge USDA to revise the Emergency Relief Program (ERP) for 2022.

America's farmers and ranchers continue to endure extreme weather events, such as hurricanes, floods, multi-year droughts, freezes and record-high temperatures. Additionally, inflation and supply chain disruptions have led to a dramatic increase in input costs, with interest rates for many operating loans approaching 10 percent. These burdens not only impact the growers we represent, but entire rural communities.

We appreciate Congress and the Biden Administration continuing to recognize the important role agricultural producers play in feeding and clothing the world. Last December, Congress passed, and President Biden signed into law, appropriations legislation providing \$3.74 billion in much-needed ERP assistance to agricultural producers impacted by a wide range of natural disasters in 2022.

Yet, we are very concerned about two newly introduced ERP 2022 provisions outlined in program guidance released on October 27: (1) progressive payment factors used to prorate payments; and (2) the method used to incorporate producer-paid insurance premiums. Neither of these provisions were part of ERP 2020 or ERP 2022, and both appear inconsistent with the congressional intent of the enabling legislation.

Additionally, these two programmatic changes will penalize many producers throughout the country. In the case of the progressive payment factor, we oppose a policy that delivers the least amount of benefit to those who have lost the most outside of the payment limits provided in statute. While we appreciate the funding restraints under which ERP 2022 was developed, we believe that USDA should instead aim to provide more equitable support for losses of all magnitudes. This can be achieved by using a single, uniform factor, as USDA has done in the past. With regards to incorporating the producer-paid premiums, this change will keep some growers from qualifying for any assistance and create a significant disparity of payments among producers.

We are also concerned that Track 2 of ERP 2022 continues USDA's burdensome reliance on Schedule F or equivalent tax documents to determine potential assistance, even though these documents often do not provide a full picture of crop revenue or losses for producers who primarily use cash accounting methods, and the approach does not follow the statute in compensating for crop losses.

Although Phase I of ERP 2020 and ERP 2021 were not perfect, they were well received by farmers experiencing losses and provided a more equitable approach to assistance than ERP 2022. We urge USDA to alter the current program calculations in a manner that more fully meets the needs of all producers.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

American Cotton Producers
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Soybean Association
American Sugarbeet Growers
Cotton Warehouse Association of America
National Alfalfa and Forage Alliance
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Cotton Ginners Association
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Peach Council
National Pecan Federation
National Pecan Shellers Association
National Sorghum Producers
North American Blueberry Council
U.S. Durum Growers Association
U.S. Peanut Federation
USA Farmers
USA Rice

Alabama Farmers Federation
Alabama Peanut Producers Association
Alabama Soybean and Corn Association
Agricultural Council of Arkansas
Arizona Cotton Growers Association
Arizona Farm Bureau
Arizona Pecan Growers Association
Arkansas Farm Bureau Federation
Arkansas Rice
Arkansas Soybean Association
California Cotton Ginners and Growers Association
Colorado Association of Wheat Growers
Colorado Farm Bureau
Corn Growers Association of North Carolina

Delta Council
Florida Citrus Mutual
Florida Farm Bureau Federation
Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association
Florida Peanut Producers Association
Florida Rice Growers
Georgia Blueberry Commission
Georgia Cotton Commission
Georgia Farm Bureau
Georgia-Florida Soybean Association
Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association
Georgia Peach Council
Georgia Peanut Commission
Georgia Pecan Growers Association
Georgia Watermelon Association
Idaho Grain Producers Association
Illinois Farm Bureau
Illinois Soybean Association
Indiana Corn Growers Association
Indiana Farm Bureau
Indiana Soybean Alliance
Iowa Corn Growers Association
Iowa Soybean Association
Kansas Association of Wheat Growers
Kansas Corn Growers Association
Kansas Farm Bureau
Kansas Soybean Association
Kentucky Corn Growers Association
Kentucky Small Grain Growers Association
Kentucky Soybean Association
Louisiana Cotton & Grain Association
Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation
Louisiana Rice Producers' Group
Michigan Farm Bureau
Michigan Soybean Association
Mid-Atlantic Soybean Association
Midwest Council on Agriculture
Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers
Minnesota Corn Growers Association
Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation
Minnesota Soybean Growers Association
Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation
Mississippi Peanut Producers Association

Mississippi Rice Council
Mississippi Soybean Association
Missouri Farm Bureau
Missouri Rice Council
Missouri Soybean Association
Montana Farm Bureau Federation
Montana Grain Growers Association
Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation
Nebraska Soybean Association
Nebraska Wheat Growers Association
New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau
New Mexico Pecan Growers Association
New York Corn & Soybean Growers Association
New York Farm Bureau
North Carolina Farm Bureau
North Carolina Small Grain Growers Association
North Carolina Soybean Producers Association
North Dakota Corn Growers Association
North Dakota Grain Growers Association
North Dakota Soybean Growers Association
Ohio Corn & Wheat Growers Association
Ohio Soybean Association
Oklahoma Cotton Council
Oklahoma Farm Bureau
Oklahoma Pecan Growers Association
Oklahoma Soybean Association
Oregon Farm Bureau
Oregon Wheat Growers League
Panhandle Peanut Growers Association
Pennsylvania Farm Bureau
Plains Cotton Growers, Inc.
Rolling Plains Cotton Growers, Inc.
San Joaquin Valley Quality Cotton Growers Association
South Carolina Corn and Soybean Association
South Carolina Farm Bureau Federation
South Carolina Growers Association
South Carolina Peach Council
South Dakota Corn Growers Association
South Dakota Farm Bureau Federation
South Dakota Soybean Association
South Texas Cotton & Grain Association
Southeastern Pecan Growers Association
Southern Cotton Growers

Southern Rolling Plains Cotton Growers Association
Southwest Council of Agribusiness
St Lawrence Cotton Growers
Tennessee Corn Growers Association
Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation
Tennessee Soybean Association
Texas Corn Producers Association
Texas Cotton Ginners' Association
Texas Farm Bureau
Texas Pecan Growers Association
Texas Rice Producers Legislative Group
Texas Soybean Association
Texas Wheat Producers Association
Utah Farm Bureau Federation
Virginia Cattlemen's Association
Virginia Farm Bureau
Virginia Soybean Association
Washington Association of Wheat Growers
Western Peanut Growers Association
Wisconsin Corn Growers Association
Wisconsin Soybean Association

CC:

The Honorable Martin Heinrich, Chairman, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

The Honorable John Hoeven, Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Andy Harris, Chairman, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration

The Honorable Sanford Bishop, Jr., Ranking Member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Chairwoman, Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition,
and Forestry

The Honorable John Boozman, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition,
and Forestry

The Honorable Glenn "GT" Thompson, Chairman, House Committee on Agriculture

The Honorable David Scott, Ranking Member, House Committee on Agriculture