

105TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. 493

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the Secretary of Agriculture should provide timely assistance to Texas farmers and livestock producers who are experiencing worsening drought conditions.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 24, 1998

Mr. THORNBERRY submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the Secretary of Agriculture should provide timely assistance to Texas farmers and livestock producers who are experiencing worsening drought conditions.

Whereas drought conditions continue throughout the State of Texas, and the National Weather Service has reported that all 10 climatic regions in Texas have received below average rainfall from March through May, a critical time in the production of corn, cotton, sorghum, wheat, and forage crops in Texas;

Whereas the statewide economic impact of the drought on Texas agriculture could be more than \$1,700,000,000 in losses, according to the Texas Agricultural Extension Service;

Whereas the direct loss of income to agricultural producers in Texas is \$517,000,000, which will lead to a loss of another \$1,200,000,000 in economic activity for the state;

Whereas the total losses for Texas cotton producers have already reached an estimated \$157,000,000;

Whereas, as of May 31, 1998, the condition of nearly half of the rangeland in Texas was rated as poor or very poor as a result of the lack of rain;

Whereas the value of lost hay production in Texas will approach an estimated \$175,000,000 statewide, leading to an economic impact of \$582,000,000;

Whereas dryland fruit and vegetable production losses in East Texas have already been estimated at \$33,000,000;

Whereas the early rains in many parts of Texas produced a large quantity of forage that, because of the subsequent drought conditions, is now extremely dry and a dangerous source of fuel for wildfires; and

Whereas the Texas Forest Service has indicated that over half of the State is in extreme or high danger of wildfires due to the drought conditions: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the House of Rep-
 2 resentatives that, with regard to the drought conditions
 3 in the State of Texas, the Secretary of Agriculture
 4 should—

5 (1) streamline the drought declaration process
 6 to provide relief to Texas farmers and livestock pro-
 7 ducers as quickly as possible;

1 (2) ensure that Farm Service Agency offices in
2 Texas are equipped with full-time and emergency
3 personnel in drought-stricken areas to assist produc-
4 ers with disaster loan application packages;

5 (3) instruct the United States Forest Service to
6 assist the State of Texas and the Federal Emer-
7 gency Management Agency in prepositioning fire
8 fighting equipment and other appropriate resources
9 in affected Texas counties;

10 (4) authorize haying and grazing on acreage en-
11 rolled in the conservation reserve program; and

12 (5) convene experts within the Department of
13 Agriculture to develop and implement an emergency
14 plan to help prevent wildfires and to overcome the
15 adverse economic impact of the continuing drought
16 so the Department of Agriculture can provide assist-
17 ance in a rapid and efficient manner for producers
18 who are suffering from drought conditions.

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