



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

July 8, 2024

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Jamie L. Whitten Building  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Room 200-A  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

The current drought situation is reaching a critical point. On behalf of North Carolina's First Congressional District, I strongly urge you to designate all nineteen counties as disaster areas. Such designation would make United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) assistance available to farmers and producers experiencing loss due to this devastating drought, providing crucial support to a dire situation.

According to the United States Drought Monitor, three counties in North Carolina's First Congressional District are currently at a D2 or severe drought level, and sixteen are currently at a D1 or moderate drought level. Drought conditions are not just a local issue, as all one hundred of North Carolina's counties are experiencing either a D0, abnormally dry, D1, or D2 level of drought. The severity and duration of this drought marks only the second time since 2000 that more than half of North Carolina's counties have seen drought classifications worsen over time, according to the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality. I have heard from constituents and witnessed first-hand the devastating effects of this drought on crops, such as withered cornfields and parched tobacco plants. Furthermore, every state from Georgia to Maryland faces similar damaging drought levels, underscoring the need for a united response to this crisis. We all must come together to address this issue.

Amidst this ongoing crisis, our farmers and producers bear the brunt of the drought's impact. Agriculture remains our top industry in North Carolina, especially in the eastern region. North Carolina ranks ninth nationally with an industry value of \$111.1 billion. In North Carolina's First Congressional District, more than **\$2.989 billion** of agricultural products are produced and sold annually, representing 16 percent of the state's agricultural sales. Moreover, the economic impact of this drought is not limited to the farming sector. It also affects local businesses that rely on the agricultural industry, creating a ripple effect felt throughout many rural communities.

The severe drought and the impending hurricane season pose a significant risk of increased flooding losses for our family farms. Hurricane winds and flooding more easily sweep away topsoil and nutrients. The drought and upcoming hurricane season leave eastern North Carolina vulnerable.

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I look forward to working with you and your team to address the current drought situation and ensure that farmers in North Carolina's First Congressional District receive the necessary assistance. Thank you for considering this request and for the critical work USDA does to support our agricultural community. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to have someone from your staff contact my Agriculture, Energy, and Trade Policy Advisor, Nathaniel Dullea, at 202-225-3101.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. G. Davis", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Donald G. Davis  
Member of Congress

CC:

The Honorable Roy Cooper, Governor of North Carolina