

Wednesday, August 8, 2012

Santa Fe, NM – Congressman Ben Ray Luján of New Mexico's Third District highlighted efforts by the federal government to assist farmers and ranchers who have been negatively impacted by the severe drought in New Mexico and across much of the country. With today's designation by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack of Sandoval County as a primary natural disaster area due to recent drought, all the counties in New Mexico's Third District are eligible for assistance from the Farm Service Agency (FSA), including FSA emergency loans.

"Farmers and ranchers across New Mexico are struggling in the face of devastating drought conditions that have gripped the region," Congressman Luján said. "The disaster declarations by the Secretary of Agriculture will make important resources available to help farmers make ends meet during this difficult time."

Farmers in eligible counties have eight months from the date of the disaster declaration to apply for emergency loan assistance. Emergency loan funds may be used to:

- Restore or replace essential property
- Pay all or part of production costs associated with the disaster year
- Pay essential family living expenses
- Reorganize the farming operation
- Refinance certain debts, excluding real estate

For more information on eligibility and how to apply for assistance, farmers should contact the New Mexico State Farm Service Agency at 505-761-4900.

Under a new USDA initiative, severe drought disasters are declared when any portion of a county meets the D2 (Drought-Severe) intensity for eight or more consecutive weeks or D3 (Drought-Extreme) or higher at any time during the growing season. This new process has cut the average time it takes to turn around a disaster request from 85 days down to 29.

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