

Wednesday, January 9, 2013

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. U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack designated a number of counties across New Mexico as a primary natural disaster area due to recent drought, making all counties in the Third District eligible for assistance from the Farm Service Agency (FSA), including FSA emergency loans.

“Last year was the hottest year ever in the United States, leaving farmers and ranchers across New Mexico struggling in the face of devastating drought conditions. We have also been impacted by a lack of rain and snowfall during the monsoon and winter months,” 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. It is also vital that Congress work toward a new farm bill, which reforms drought and crop insurance and helps farmers and ranchers better endure severe drought conditions.”

Nineteen counties across New Mexico have been designated as primary natural disaster areas due to a recent drought:

Chaves	De Baca	Lea	Rio Arriba	Santa Fe
Cibola	Eddy	McKinley	Roosevelt	Taos
Colfax	Guadalupe	Mora	San Juan	Union
Curry	Harding	Quay	San Miguel	

Nine counties have been named as contiguous disaster counties, making them also eligible for assistance:

Bernalillo	Lincoln	Otero	Socorro	Valencia
Catron	Los Alamos	Sandoval	Torrance	

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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