

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 22, 2025

Ms. Brooke Rollins  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dearest Secretary Rollins,

Thank you for your commitment to delivering disaster relief for farmers.

The natural disasters that California faced in 2023 and 2024 significantly impacted crop yields, damaged infrastructure, and contributed to the spread of pests. Disaster assistance for California producers would provide direct financial relief to farmers and facilitate the replacement of infrastructure and equipment, ultimately ensuring the continued production of crops to support the domestic food supply. At hearings and in response to Questions for the Record, you (and many USDA colleagues) made commitments to ensuring that “any future USDA financial assistance programs are appropriately distributed.”<sup>1</sup> As such, I request your continued commitment to fair distribution of disaster relief and request the following information regarding USDA’s implementation of assistance authorized by the American Relief Act of 2025.

1. I understand that USDA has decided to limit the use of block grant authority to states impacted by hurricanes. In 2023, many farmers in California were hit hard by a hurricane that became a tropical storm once it was inland. Atmospheric rivers and wildfires are just some of the additional disasters the state faced. I have also learned that USDA is requiring very specific kinds of losses and documentation (e.g., recorded infrastructure losses) in order for states to apply for block grants. USDA's decisions have effectively prevented California’s agricultural and rural communities from receiving assistance through the block grant authority. **I ask that USDA reconsider the parameters dictating how USDA is providing block grants so that states which faced severe losses due to disaster, including California, are eligible for a block grant. Specifically, I ask (i) that natural disasters beyond hurricanes, including those faced by California, be accounted for and (ii) that information/documentation readily available by states like California be deemed acceptable in application for a USDA disaster block grant.**
2. As you know, specialty crop and diversified agriculture are critical to California, in addition to the health and resilience of American consumers and agriculture. The Supplemental Disaster Relief Program (SDRP) will be particularly important for such growers, given the lack of crop-specific insurance policies in many cases or lack of

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.agriculture.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/9034b53a-0a87-e8d1-842e-6821551fc940/S.HRG.119-5\\_Transcript1.pdf](https://www.agriculture.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/9034b53a-0a87-e8d1-842e-6821551fc940/S.HRG.119-5_Transcript1.pdf)

effective risk management options for others, an issue worthy of USDA and the Senate Agriculture Committee's attention. Phase 2 of the Emergency Relief Program that USDA previously implemented was effective for specialty crop farmers because it provided a revenue-based calculation in which farmers enrolled by demonstrating a loss in revenue compared to revenue of an earlier year. This provided an avenue for growers, especially diversified growers that might grow several different crops, who might not have otherwise necessary production data to obtain disaster relief. As USDA develops the formula for distributing aid to farmers through SDRP State 2, **I request that the rule submitted to OMB in August 2025 similarly allow specialty crop and diversified farmers an option to easily and effectively access disaster relief.**

3. The authorizing language of the American Relief Act of 2025 included specific language requiring that "the Secretary shall offer individualized technical assistance to interested non-insured producers to help them apply for assistance made available under this heading."<sup>2</sup> Many specialty crop growers may not have bought insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage during the applicable years because, as noted above, they either lack effective insurance options or do not have individual crop policies available. **As such, please share how USDA plans to implement this language so that uninsured and NAP producers will receive adequate outreach and assistance in receiving relief.**

I am sincerely grateful for the commitments you have made to working with me and impacted stakeholders from California to see that USDA programs are equitably distributed, regardless of geography and product. I would greatly appreciate a timely response to this letter no later than August 1, 2025. I very much look forward to working with you on these issues and am open to further discussing solutions that work for all states. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Adam B. Schiff". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Adam" and last name "Schiff" clearly legible, and "B." in the middle.

U.S. Senator Adam Schiff