

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 27, 2018

Honorable Sonny Perdue, Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

Last week, we wrote to you requesting any available emergency assistance for Oregon farmers whose crops have been decimated by this summer's wildland fires. This week, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced it would provide up to \$12 billion in aid to farmers affected by the President's ongoing trade war, which is limiting market access for farmers across the country. We write today requesting that a portion of these funds be used to assist Oregon farmers whose crops have been destroyed by these fires.

In Oregon, wheat is a top ten commodity valued at approximately \$186 million. However, fires in Oregon, including the Substation Fire near The Dalles, have done untold damage to Oregon wheat production. No amount of global market access will deliver these burned stalks to processors around the world. And as we wrote last week, we are concerned that federal programs such as crop insurance, or even normal disaster assistance, are not sufficient for these types of fire-induced disasters.

It is our understanding that the Department of Agriculture will provide aid to farmers through the Commodity Credit Corporation's general authority. This authority allows you, as secretary, to provide broad commodity support, including loans, purchases, payments, and disaster assistance. Oregon farmers desperately need such assistance from the Commodity Credit Corporation due to these fires.

The goal of U.S. trade policy ought to be one of leveling the playing field for American farmers. But instead, the president is taking a bad situation -- increasing instances of crop loss due to natural disasters -- and making it worse with a trade war he started without any apparent strategy or consideration of the consequences. We agree with our colleagues in the Senate that farmers want trade, not aid. But regardless of the president's trade strategy, USDA must act to assist American farmers enduring disaster now.

We respectfully request USDA use a portion of the newly-announced aid to assist Oregon farmers whose crops have been lost due to fires.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Kate Brown
Governor of Oregon