



March 2, 2022

Chair Torrey Westrom
Agriculture and Rural Development Finance and Policy Committee
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3201
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Westrom and members of the committee,

The Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) appreciates the opportunity to share written testimony on behalf of our nearly 30,000 members in support of a drought relief package that will provide much needed resources for Minnesota farmers and ranchers.

The drought is long over for many, but for family farmers and ranchers across the state the impacts continue. To make sure any possible drought package was providing resources needed by farmers across the state, we asked our members to share their stories of the drought on their family farms. It is clear the effects from the drought continue and relief is needed.

- In Aitkin county, a farmer's hay crop yields went from 500 bales to 280 bales. Calves were weaned earlier to help manage pastureland, but still led to losses and purchasing more expensive feed to provide for the herd because they were weaned too early.
- A Christmas tree farm in Northern Minnesota reported seedling mortality, smaller growth margins on existing trees, and significant impact on the pumpkin crop.
- A Beltrami County farmer saw hay yields drop from 3,000 to 1,000 bales compared to the previous year. The farm averages 550 head of cattle on their pastures that they rotationally graze, but because of lack of good grazing, most of the herd were shipped south. This had a ripple effect on the local economy, with the dollars typically spent locally to maintain the herd are now being spent six hours away where the herd now resides.
- In Cass County, one farm's hay crop yields were down 60-70 percent, leading to short and expensive supplies that will carry far into 2022. Another farm reported no hay or corn growth, forcing them to sell their entire cattle herd to avoid going deeper into debt.
- A young farmer in Clearwater County purchased his first herd in 2020, and in late summer 2021 had to sell all but three head to stay afloat. There was not enough good pasture to rotationally graze, and no hay production to supplement. Having to purchase expensive hay was the biggest factor in having to sell most of the herd.

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- A farmer in Itasca County reported buying extra hay to feed livestock, with hay costs doubling, and having to bring in hay from over 150 miles away. Without timely support, they are considering selling their entire herd.
- In Ottertail County, a farmer's alfalfa yield losses of 118 round bales (130 bales in 2020, just 12 in 2021). Another family farm reported having to start buying hay in November, when typically they don't have to purchase until April, if at all.
- In St. Louis County, one farmer reported having to start feeding hay earlier than normal, and having to pay inflated hay and shipping costs. Typically they spent \$5,000 on hay, but jumped to \$12,000 this year, and may still run out of hay by March, when they typically feed hay until May. This may lead to them having to sell half of their cattle
- In Todd County, a first cutting of an alfalfa field typically yielded 60 round bales, but in 2021 only yielded six, and the second cutting yield was down 50 percent.

The money provided from the proposed rapid relief grants will not make farmers and ranchers whole; however, it will help with some of the additional challenges presented by circumstances out of their control. The additional money for the Rural Finance Authority will also help to assist with needed cash flow for many farmers and ranchers that are still finding a path forward. By providing resources through the rapid relief grants and funds for the Rural Finance Authority's loan program, we can target help to where it's needed most- specific items like feed assistance, water hauling and handling, fencing supplies and more that will provide tangible resources needed on our farms and ranches.

We urge this committee to send needed relief for Minnesota farmers and ranchers as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Glessing". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dan Glessing
President