

DISASTER PROGRAMS

Much of the country has been gripped by dry, hot weather in recent months. Farmers and ranchers have been severely impacted by these disasters, and initiatives at the U.S. Department of Agriculture can help. However, without legislative action, some of the programs that are most prepared to offer assistance will not be available. Fortunately, agricultural leaders in Congress have started the process to enact emergency disaster measures.

In late July, the House Agriculture Committee passed a bill that would extend the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus (WHIP+) to apply to losses suffered in 2020 and 2021. The House bill would provide an estimated \$8.5 billion to farmers who were impacted by bad weather or natural disasters, like wildfires and hurricanes as the name suggests, along with drought, excess moisture, high winds, derechos, excessive heat, smoke-tainted wine grapes, and premature freezing temperatures.

The Senate Appropriations subcommittee on agriculture also included language in their annual spending bill to provide \$7 billion in disaster relief for farmers and ranchers. As in the House bill, this new funding would bolster existing USDA disaster programs like WHIP+ to cover 2020 and 2021 losses. As part of this \$7 billion, the Senate language includes \$750 million for livestock producers who have had losses due to wildfire or drought. Additionally, Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT) and Sen. John Hoeven (R-ND) have introduced a bill that would improve the Livestock Forage Program (LFP) and the Emergency Livestock Assistance Program (ELAP) and make them permanent.

Although many USDA programs can help during disasters, and crop insurance can cover more typical production or revenue losses, major natural disasters have made clear the need for LFP, ELAP, and WHIP+ to be extended by Congress.

54%

of the contiguous U.S. was **abnormally dry or worse**.

26%

of U.S. was in **extreme or exceptional drought**, as of the Drought Monitor report published on August 3, 2021.

3M ACRES

across the U.S. have been **burned by wildfires** this year, as of August 1, 2021.

WHAT WE CAN DO:

-  Urge inclusion of the disaster provisions in the final Fiscal Year 2022 appropriations bill in both the House and the Senate.
-  Work with USDA to better understand the impacts of disasters on your farm or ranch or in your community.