



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

# Finance

SENATOR CHUCK GRASSLEY, OF IOWA - CHAIRMAN

<http://finance.senate.gov>

## MEMORANDUM

To: Reporters and Editors  
Re: Resumption of agricultural exports from the Mississippi River  
Da: Tuesday, Sept. 6, 2005

Sen. Chuck Grassley, chairman of the Committee on Finance, today made the following comment on Hurricane Katrina and the resumption of agricultural exports from the Mississippi River. The Committee on Finance has Senate jurisdiction over international trade.

“Like those of many other Americans, my prayers go out to the people of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama harmed by Hurricane Katrina. The Congress has acted quickly to see that people in those states are provided relief.

“Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent flooding of New Orleans are also impacting Iowa and other states. The bulk of the country’s – and Iowa’s – exports of corn and soybeans are exported through the Mississippi Gulf. The conditions of the Mississippi River and export terminals in the New Orleans area are thus of great importance to farmers throughout the United States.

“As can be expected, the port of New Orleans is not operating at this time. But while the devastation caused by Katrina in Louisiana is severe, initial reports indicate that the situation could be worse from the standpoint of resuming grain exports. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has surveyed the Mississippi River from Baton Rouge to the Gulf of Mexico and has not found channel obstructions. The Coast Guard has announced that the lower Mississippi River is open to barges, tugs, and ships although traffic is limited in places to vessels with drafts of 35 feet or less. Moreover, the Coast Guard states that transits can occur during daylight hours only, and one-way traffic is required in some areas.

“Employees of New Orleans area export terminals have, so far, reported relatively minor damage to their facilities. While power remains a problem, most of these facilities have auxiliary power units that could be used for loading and unloading operations at least for the short term. So it appears that terminals might, at least in the near future, begin partial operations. I hope that they will become fully operational as soon as possible. If it becomes necessary, the ports of Houston and Corpus Christi, as well as other ports, have the capacity to handle commodities that would otherwise be transported through New Orleans.

“As chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, which has jurisdiction in the Senate over international trade matters, I’ll continue to closely monitor the situation on the Mississippi River. The resumption of agricultural exports from the Gulf region is important to farmers in Iowa and other states and to the U.S. economy overall. If shipments don’t resume soon, I’ll evaluate what steps

to take next to facilitate the resumption of shipments.”