

PEDRO R. PIERLUISI
PUERTO RICO

COMMITTEES:
JUDICIARY

NATURAL RESOURCES

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
2410 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
(202) 225-2615 Fax: (202) 225-2154

SAN JUAN OFFICE:
157 AVENIDA DE LA CONSTITUCIÓN
ANTIGUO EDIFICIO DE MEDICINA TROPICAL
ALA DE ENFERMERÍA 2DO PISO
SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO 00901
(787) 723-6333 Fax: (787) 729-7738

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-5400

June 8, 2015

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250


Dear Secretary Vilsack:

I write to call your attention to prolonged and worsening drought conditions occurring in Puerto Rico, and to respectfully request that immediate assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture be made available for affected agricultural producers in the territory. The latest information available from the U.S. Drought Monitor—which USDA uses as a barometer to measure drought severity across the entire United States—indicates that 52 of Puerto Rico's 78 municipalities are experiencing abnormally dry conditions, with 29 of these municipalities experiencing moderate drought conditions classified at the D1 level of drought intensity on the monitor scale and six other municipalities experiencing severe drought conditions classified at the D2 level. These indicators reinforce reports that my district office is receiving from my constituents who are suffering livestock and crop losses as a result of current drought conditions.

I know that USDA is continually assessing, aligning, and adjusting its resources to aid communities and agricultural producers most impacted by prolonged drought conditions occurring across the United States, and that USDA is implementing in affected communities a number of programs that Congress has authorized to specifically assist producers in times of such need. These programs include the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP), the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP), and the Tree Assistance Program (TAP) administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). I want to ensure that Puerto Rico is prioritized as part of this assessment and prioritization process, and that all USDA drought programs and resources are extended to Puerto Rico to the fullest extent.

Additionally, I urge consideration of a disaster declaration for Puerto Rico given current and projected drought conditions. Thank you for your attention to this pressing matter.

Sincerely,


Pedro R. Pierluisi
Member of Congress