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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 6, 2007

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The Honorable Mike Johanns
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Johanns:

I write to thank you for the work you and the Department of Agriculture have done thus far in the wake of the extreme blizzards that recently hit the Southeast part of Colorado. I ask that USDA continue to cooperate in efforts that will aid rural Colorado in its time of great need.

Coloradans appreciate the assistance you have provided in the last few weeks. The low-interest emergency loans made available to farmers and ranchers in 20 rural counties will help alleviate the burden caused by the storms. State and local governments in Colorado have also used every tool at their disposal to help those who suffered losses. Unfortunately, due to the scale of this disaster, emergency loans alone are not adequate to meet the fundamental economic needs of Colorado producers. Robust disaster assistance legislation, which I have pursued since my first months in the Senate, is urgently needed.

Indeed, the situation is dire. Over 10,000 cattle have perished due to the storms; a number that will surely rise as the rooftop-high snow drifts begin to melt. The livestock industry is a keystone of my state's agricultural economy. In addition, please note that these storms are merely the latest in a series of natural disasters, including prolonged and severe drought. I invite you to Colorado to tour the areas affected by the disaster, so that you may see firsthand the aftermath of these storms as well as speak to my constituents who have weathered them.

I hope the Administration revises its position on comprehensive disaster assistance. Rural Coloradans show inspiring dedication to their farms, ranches, and way of life. At all levels we must ensure the survival of these essential producers. I hope you will use all tools at your disposal, including secretarial disaster declarations, as well as the release of any available funds for recovery efforts.

Thank you for your consideration and action on this important request.

Sincerely,



Ken Salazar
United States Senator