



Current Drought Resources and Information Updated August 1, 2012



Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack chaired a meeting of the White House Rural Council at the Executive Office Building in Washington, D.C. on Friday, July 27, 2012 to update members and stakeholders on the Administration response to the drought.

Please note: Information on the current drought is updated frequently. A large collection of up-to-date information, including fact sheets for producers, is maintained publicly at [USDA's Drought Page](#). All interested stakeholders are encouraged to check the web site often.

Secretary Vilsack's latest announcement regarding USDA Disaster Designations for impacted counties was made on August 1. You can [read more here](#).

You can always turn to www.usda.gov/drought for up-to-date information.

The Obama Administration's Efforts to Respond to the Drought

President Obama and Secretary Vilsack are committed to taking every possible step to help farmers and ranchers recover when disaster strikes. Our thoughts are with U.S. farmers and ranchers across the United States during a time of significant drought.

Last week, [President Obama met with Secretary Vilsack and members of his Cabinet](#) to discuss additional steps the Administration could take to help farmers, ranchers and business owners manage and recover from the current drought. Later in the week, President Obama directed Secretary Vilsack to convene a meeting of the White House Rural Council to update members and stakeholders on the Administration response to the drought. Vilsack will update Rural Council members and stakeholders again next week on new steps taken by the Administration to combat the drought.

On Wednesday, August 1, Secretary Vilsack signed disaster designations for an additional 218 counties in 12 states as primary natural disaster areas due to damage and losses caused by drought and excessive heat. Counties designated are in the states of Arkansas, Georgia, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Mississippi, Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Wyoming.

During the 2012 crop year, USDA has designated 1,584 unduplicated counties across 32 states as disaster areas—1,452 due to drought—making all qualified farm operators in the areas eligible for low-interest emergency loans. More than half (50.3 percent) of all counties in the United States have been designated disaster areas by USDA in 2012, mainly due to drought.

During the week ending July 29, USDA's [National Agricultural Statistics Service](#) reported that U.S. soybeans rated 37 percent very poor to poor, matching the lowest conditions observed during the drought of 1988. NASS also reported that 48 percent of the U.S. corn crop was rated very poor to poor, while 57 percent of the nation's pastures and rangeland are rated very poor or poor condition.

Under Secretary Vilsack's leadership, [USDA has announced a variety of steps](#) to get assistance to producers impacted by the drought. We know that agriculture remains a bright spot in our nation's economic recovery and it is important that USDA has the tools to act quickly and deliver assistance to farmers and ranchers when they need it most. These announcements include:

- Allowing additional acres under CRP to be used for [emergency haying or grazing](#). The action allows lands that are not yet classified as "under severe drought" but that are "abnormally dry" to be used for haying and grazing.
- Allowing producers to modify current [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQIP) contracts to allow for grazing, livestock watering, and other conservation activities to address drought conditions.

- Authorizing haying and grazing of [Wetlands Reserve Program](#) (WRP) easement areas in drought-affected areas where haying and grazing is consistent with conservation of wildlife habitat and wetlands. USDA has expedited its authorization process for this haying and grazing.
- Encouraging crop insurance companies to provide a short grace period for farmers on unpaid insurance premiums, as some farming families can be expected to struggle to make ends meet at the close of the crop year. (Secretary Vilsack announced on August 1 that crop insurance companies have agreed to provide a short grace period for farmers on insurance premiums in 2012.)
- Reducing the [emergency loan](#) interest rate from 3.75 percent to 2.25 percent.
- Lowering the reduction in the annual rental payment to producers on CRP acres used for emergency haying or grazing from 25 percent to 10 percent in 2012.
- In addition to USDA actions, the U.S. Small Business Administration has also made 63 agency declarations in 33 states covering 1,675 counties, providing a pathway for those affected to apply for an [Economic Injury Disaster Loan](#) (EIDL). SBA's EIDLs are available to small, non-farm businesses and small agricultural cooperatives that are economically affected by the drought in their community.

USDA agencies have been working closely with state and local officials, as well as individuals, businesses, farmers and ranchers, to help get people back on their feet. We continue to urge producers, stakeholders and local government officials to go to www.usda.gov/drought for the latest information on assistance for impacted producers.

Additional Resources

For more information regarding the ongoing drought, USDA's efforts to help impacted farmers and ranchers, and other useful information, you can always check the USDA's [Disaster and Drought Assistance](#) webpage for regular updates. Below are some recent updates and other relevant items from USDA regarding the ongoing drought:

Infographic:

[Resilience of American Agriculture - Innovation, Diversity and Growing Markets](#)

Recent Press Releases:

[August 1 – Designation of Additional Disaster Counties and Additional Drought Assistance](#)

Photos:

[White House Rural Council Meeting 7/27/12](#)

[Flickr Collections- Drought](#)

USDA Radio:

Radio information is updated daily at the [USDA Radio Newslines and Newslines Archives](#)

Web Information Resources:

[Disaster Designation Map \(8/1/12\)](#)

[Emergency Preparedness and Response Page](#)

[USDA's Drought Page](#)

[Agricultural Weather Updates](#)

[ERS Website](#)