

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 29, 2018

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Capitol Building, S-128
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Capitol Building, S-128
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development, Food and Drug
Administration and Related Agencies
129 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development, Food and Drug
Administration and Related Agencies
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Vice Chairman Leahy:

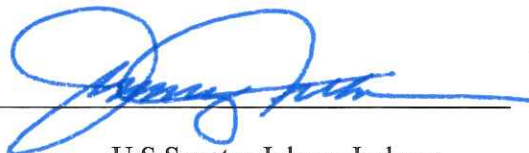
Hurricane Michael caused extensive damage to Georgia and across the Southeast. Georgia's agricultural industry alone suffered more than \$2.5 billion in losses. Late-season crop losses are especially devastating with the producer having already invested the vast majority of production costs into the crop. Additionally, the losses extend beyond crop damage to include buildings, equipment, irrigation pivots and other infrastructure.

Due to the severity and timing of the losses, additional assistance is needed to allow producers to recover a portion of expenses associated with the 2018 crop and secure production financing for the 2019 crop. The current WHIP program being implemented by USDA for the 2017 crop provides a template for assistance, but critical improvements are needed in order to provide the necessary support. While we believe the Secretary has discretion to make necessary changes, we believe the following issues should be addressed in a supplemental disaster appropriations bill.

1. To determine WHIP payments, use net insurance indemnities, i.e. indemnities less producer-paid premiums, instead of gross insurance indemnities. This change will provide greater benefit to those producers with higher coverage levels. In addition, non-irrigated producers will realize greater benefits due to higher insurance premiums.
2. Provide a WHIP factor of at least 85 percent but that is increased incrementally for producers who bought higher levels of insurance coverage.
3. Establish a Pecan and Specialty Crop State Block Grant Program using language similar to that establishing the Florida Citrus block grant program for 2017.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



U.S. Senator Johnny Isakson



U.S. Senator David A. Perdue