



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

February 18, 2021

The Honorable Kevin Shea
Acting Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Shea:

Under the provisions of 7 C.F.R. Part 759, I request a disaster designation for Texas counties impacted by severe winter weather and for their contiguous counties. Texas agricultural producers continue to be greatly affected by the severe ice and freezing temperatures; these weather conditions have substantially affected producers and caused severe production losses. These producers are in need of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) assistance to return to normal operations.

For example, early estimates made by Texas Citrus Mutual show Texas citrus sustained approximately \$305.0 million loss to the crop in Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy counties. Total damage assessments are still being calculated, but daily agriculture operations across the entire state have been slowed both by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and by loss of electricity and continued freezing temperatures caused by severe winter weather.

I declared a disaster in all 254 Texas counties on February 12, 2021. I also requested that President Biden issue an emergency declaration under Section 501 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. § 5191. The President promptly granted Texas's request on February 14, 2021. On February 18, 2021, I requested that President Biden issue a Major Disaster Declaration.

The State of Texas is requesting that USDA expeditiously issue a disaster designation for the following counties: Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy, and any other county that demonstrates a significant production loss as a result of severe winter weather. As damage assessments are completed throughout the rest of the state, I expect many additional counties will qualify for loss across all of the agriculture sectors. A USDA disaster designation would make federal assistance, such as emergency loans, available to producers who have suffered losses in the above counties as well as in counties that are contiguous to a designated county.

The Honorable Kevin Shea

February 18, 2021

Page 2

As we continue to assess production losses or losses to quality in the other affected counties, I reserve the right to request that USDA extend its disaster designation to additional counties in Texas.

Thank you for your continuous support of the Texas agriculture industry and your consideration of this request for a disaster designation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Abbott". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Greg Abbott
Governor

GA:frk