TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

TODD STAPLES
COMMISSIONER

September 16, 2008

The Honorable Ed Schafer
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Schafer:

Following the devastating and on-going impacts of Hurricane Ike, I write to open a dialogue with our federal partners on long-term agricultural and rural recovery. The state-federal partnership structure for immediate emergency response is advancing with progress and currently remains the top priority. Just as important is our proactive approach to long-term recovery.

We have already seen the staggering effects Hurricane Ike has had on Texas agriculture and rural communities, and as our emergency response continues, I am certain we will see much more devastation that will need to be addressed through long-term recovery assistance. In an effort to plan for future recovery, I seek assistance from USDA for needs stretching across a broad spectrum. I am aware of the limited resources and authorities available to you; however, I seek the proven and reliable ingenuity of your staff. The list below is intended as a starting point for this request:

- Financial assistance for costs associated with obtaining animal feed resources;
- Animal feed assistance possibly through donated protein-source commodities;
- Financial assistance for grazing lands rehabilitation;
- Haying and grazing access to certain federally protected lands with forage, such as CRP lands;
- Financial assistance for clearing debris;
- Financial assistance for rebuilding livestock fences and other critical structures;
- Indemnity for livestock deaths;
- Assistance with animal carcass removal and disposal;
- Activation of a crop disaster program;
- Financial assistance for forest lands rehabilitation.

These needs do not address other long-term effects of the storm, such as animal and plant health related issues that will certainly arise. Your Texas field staff personnel have been

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tremendous resources, and I seek your assistance in forwarding the resources necessary to augment their effectiveness.

As this dialogue continues, my staff and I remain available to provide you with any information essential to improving the partnership between our agencies in addressing these needs. Thank you in advance for your assistance and for your continued partnership.

Sincerely yours,

Todd Staples

TS/DD/mw

cc:
Governor Rick Perry
Texas Congressional Delegation
John Fuston, Farm Service Agency
Don Gohmert, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Bob Hillman, Texas Animal Health Commission
Ed Smith, Texas AgriLife Extension Service
Tom Boggus, Texas Forest Service
Steve McCraw, Governor's Office of Homeland Security
Jack Colley, Governor's Office of Homeland Security