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ALLARD SAYS USDA AGREES TO OPEN NEW PROGRAMS TO HELP COLORADO RANCHERS AND FARMERS DROUGHT STRICKEN LANDS WILL HAVE PRIORITY

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Wayne Allard (R-CO) on Monday was informed by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) intends to open new programs to help Colorado farmers and ranchers conserve their agricultural lands.

Last week, Senator Allard wrote Secretary Veneman stressing that the drought conditions in Colorado would lead to erosion and have environmental impacts on farm and ranch lands .

“Colorado is facing its worst drought in the last hundred years, so assistance to help Colorado’s farmers and ranchers protect their land is critical ,” said Allard.

The new programs will be administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service(NRCS) under the USDA. They include per acre financial assistance to farmers to plant cover crops and prescribed grazing agreements for ranchers.

“Serious soil erosion and permanent environmental degradation is imminent unless we act now to prevent such damage,” wrote Allard in his letter to Veneman. “I urge you to quickly establish emergency drought programs that focus on conserving critical lands during these unprecedented times.”

Programs for cover crops will help protect fields from wind and rain that can lead to erosion and also provides assistance for farmers who use no till farming practices. The prescribed grazing agreements will help ranchers develop sound grazing practices to prevent overgrazing and stop pasture lands from being destroyed during the drought.

“The decision by Secretary Veneman today will give Colorado farmers and ranchers valuable options to surviving the drought and lessen the environmental damage that would have been caused by over-grazing already over-stressed pasture land,” added Allard.

Farmers and ranchers who want to find out if they qualify for these programs should contact their local NRCS office.

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