



National Cattlemen's  
Beef Association

May 15, 2020

Collin Peterson, Chairman  
House Agriculture Committee  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Pat Roberts, Chairman  
Senate Agriculture Committee  
328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Mike Conaway, Ranking Member  
House Agriculture Committee  
1010 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Debbie Stabenow, Ranking Member  
Senate Agriculture Committee  
328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The undersigned agricultural groups represent cattle producers across the country who have been negatively impacted by the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Thank you for your work to provide necessary resources to America's farmers and ranchers whose day-to-day operations have been affected by COVID-19. In addition to the flexibilities provided, we ask that Congress work to ensure that agricultural producers do not face a forage shortage in the coming weeks and months. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has indicated they require additional authority to provide flexibilities in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) outside of the existing definition of "natural disaster". We urge Congress to grant USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) the ability to open Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage for emergency haying and grazing, in addition to removing the Risk Management Agency's November 1st deadline for harvesting and grazing prevented plant acreage cover crops – directly in response to COVID-19 impacts. The *Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act* would allow haying and grazing of 5 million Soil Health and Income Protection Program (SHIPP) acres until the end of the calendar year. While work remains to be done on the HEROES Act, this provision recognizes the need for flexibility regarding these acres, providing a strong foundation for ongoing legislative efforts.

As a result of processing disruptions, farmers and ranchers are faced with uncertainty about their ability to keep and feed livestock for longer periods of time, understanding they will likely face shortages in both forage and acreage. Allowing cattle to graze achieves an effective maintenance diet, but livestock producers will also look to feed rations with a higher forage content in the absence of adequate grazing acreage. COVID-19 has created a supply chain emergency for the entire livestock industry, and Congress must respond.

While the undersigned groups appreciate previous action taken by USDA to provide flexibility in conservation and disaster-related programs, these allowances do not provide the resources to sustain



forage demand for millions of animals across the country. While COVID-19 is not a weather-related event, it is a naturally occurring phenomenon causing widespread losses across the agricultural industry. We respectfully ask that Congress provide necessary flexibility for livestock producers impacted by COVID-19 to hay and graze their CRP acreage with no reduction in annual rental rate. Additionally, immediate passage of the Cover Crop Flexibility Act of 2020 will permanently address the domino effect created by producers' inability to plant crops in the spring and summer. By allowing producers to graze and harvest prevented plant cover crop acreage, Congress can close the forage gap during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Thank you for your continued commitment to America's farmers and ranchers. We look forward to working with you to ensure that livestock producers have the resources they need to weather this storm.

Sincerely,

National Cattlemen's Beef Association  
Alabama Cattlemen's Association  
Arizona Cattle Feeders' Association  
California Cattlemen's Association  
Colorado Cattlemen's Association  
Colorado Livestock Association  
Idaho Cattlemen's Association  
Indiana Beef Cattle Association  
Illinois Beef Association  
Iowa Cattlemen's Association  
Florida Cattlemen's Association  
Georgia Cattlemen's Association  
Kansas Livestock Association  
Kentucky Cattlemen's Association  
Louisiana Cattlemen's Association  
Maryland Cattlemen's Association  
Michigan Cattlemen's Association  
Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association  
Mississippi Cattlemen's Association  
Missouri Cattlemen's Association  
Nebraska Cattlemen  
New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association  
North Carolina Cattlemen's Association  
North Dakota Stockmen's Association  
Ohio Cattlemen's Association  
Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association  
Oregon Cattlemen's Association  
Pennsylvania Cattlemen's Association

South Dakota Cattlemen's Association  
Texas Cattle Feeders Association  
Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association  
Utah Cattlemen's Association  
Virginia Cattlemen's Association  
Washington Cattlemen's Association  
Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association  
Wyoming Stock Growers Association