

STATEMENT OF BROOKE L. ROLLINS
SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE
BEFORE THE SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

July 21, 2026

Chairwoman Collins, Vice Chairwoman Murray, and distinguished members of the Committee: I appreciate the opportunity to be before you to discuss this supplemental economic and disaster assistance request that will complement burgeoning market access secured by President Trump and secure the path for American farmers to make it to the next growing season.

I am proud of the work we are doing, under the bold leadership of President Trump, to put our hardworking farmers, ranchers, and rural communities back at the center of policymaking and the national conversation. Truly, it has never been more important that we continue to put first the men and women who work the land, tend livestock, and call the heartland home. As our very first President and founding farmer, George Washington, told a joint session of Congress in 1796: “It will not be doubted, that with reference either to individual or national welfare, Agriculture is of primary importance.” More than just an economically vital industry, it helps make our very freedom possible. If we wish future generations to enjoy the same blessings of liberty that have characterized our nation for 250 years, we must fight for the prosperity of American agriculture with every ounce of our being. That is exactly what we have done over the past 18 months, and it is what we will continue to do.

As many of you are aware, the Trump Administration inherited a farm economy that saw the cost of doing business skyrocket. Commodity prices plummeted from 30-year highs. Farm income experienced historic declines. And our farmers saw no new trade deals and inherited a forecasted \$50 billion U.S. agricultural trade deficit.

From Day One, we went to work. By rightsizing government. By cutting red tape. By reforming and modernizing outdated programs and infrastructure. By expanding market opportunities for farmers both abroad and here at home. By restoring the integrity of programs under USDA’s purview. By defending our producers from politically motivated lawfare. By making crystal clear that farm security *is* national security. And by taking some of the toughest, deep-seated threats to the very foundation of our freedom and prosperity head on.

President Trump’s Working Families Tax Cuts Act, as supported by Senate Republicans, delivered a much-needed landmark victory for farmers and ranchers, by increasing reference prices for the first time in over a decade, adding up to 30 million new base acres for farm safety net programs, saving two million family farms from the death tax, and providing greater program integrity for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), among other advantageous provisions.

While we have clearly made tremendous progress, I want to acknowledge that such a seismic reroute cannot happen overnight. As such, I hope we will continue to work together to build upon the great progress together, including through today's discussion on the President's request for additional aid.

Putting Farmers First

Since President Trump took office, this Administration has made supporting America's farmers and ranchers one of its highest priorities. We have used Congressionally appropriated funds and funds from the CCC to provide timely economic and disaster assistance to producers across the country.

To date, USDA has delivered more than \$40 billion in assistance through programs tailored to the challenges farmers have faced. We have helped producers recover from disasters in 2023 and 2024 through the Supplemental Disaster Relief Program, the Emergency Livestock Relief Program, and state disaster block grants. We have provided economic assistance to help producers weather declining farm income through the Emergency Commodity Assistance Program for 2024 and, most recently, through the Farmer Bridge Assistance Program and the Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers Program for 2025. Combined with crop insurance and USDA's permanent disaster programs, these efforts have provided critical support to farm families across the country.

But as I have traveled across rural America, meeting with farmers, ranchers, foresters, and agricultural leaders, I have heard the same message time and again. While this assistance has been indispensable, many producers are now facing a new year of losses that existing programs simply were not designed to address.

Fruit growers in Pennsylvania, New York, Washington State, and Florida suffered devastating freeze losses this winter. Ranchers in Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas have battled destructive wildfires. Farmers continue to recover from hurricanes, floods, severe storms, and other natural disasters, while nearly 47 percent of the country is currently experiencing some level of drought.

In community after community, I've heard the testimony from producers who are doing everything right but have been impacted by these storms and wildfires and have had crop losses they simply cannot absorb. My message to them has been clear: the Trump administration is fighting for our farmers and want to ensure they have the support and resources they need to continue to produce the safest, most reliable, and most abundant food supply in the world. That is why the Administration has requested an additional \$11.1 billion in supplemental agricultural assistance—critical funding to provide emergency relief to help producers manage this uncertainty and support them as they plant next year's crop

The proposal includes \$10 billion in temporary economic assistance for 2026 row crop and specialty crop producers. This assistance builds on the support USDA has already delivered and complements the expanded market opportunities being created through President Trump's trade agenda. It is designed to help

otherwise viable operations survive another difficult production year and continue producing the food, fuel, and fiber America depends upon.

The proposal also includes \$1.1 billion to help producers recover from catastrophic freeze losses suffered this past winter. This funding would supplement crop insurance and USDA's permanent disaster programs, recognizing that existing programs do not fully compensate every producer or every type of loss. Congress has taken similar action following previous disasters, including providing supplemental assistance after the 2023 and 2024 hurricane seasons. We believe producers affected by this year's freeze events deserve the same support.

This request is targeted, temporary, and responsive to the challenges producers are facing today. This supplemental request addresses the extraordinary economic and disaster losses producers are experiencing in 2026.

As I travel through the countryside, I have heard loud and clear — our farmers and ranchers want fair markets, not endless hand-outs. They don't want to farm for government checks. Our aid programs serve as a limited but critical bridge to the improvements we have made through the Working Families Tax Cuts Act, the massive new trade markets opening up, and the decrease in input costs and inflation—as evidenced in the June CPI report, which saw the largest drop in inflation since April 2020.

This vision of long-term freedom undergirds each of our short-term solutions, and under President Trump's leadership we will not rest until every farmer is free from the cycle of dependence and back in control of their farms and their futures. That long-term freedom goes beyond agriculture — it is for all Americans. But like our food supply, our national security, and our way of life, it begins on the farm.

I look forward to working with Congress to ensure America's farmers and ranchers have the certainty they need to continue feeding, fueling, and clothing the world.