

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 4, 2017

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
U.S. Secretary of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

Secretary Perdue,

We are writing to request your urgent attention to the Hurricane Irma damage assessment released today by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) estimating the losses incurred by Florida's diverse agricultural sectors. The storm destroyed some of our state's most productive agricultural lands, causing over \$2 billion in crop losses and \$2.5 billion in total damage and losses across all segments of Florida agriculture. We appreciate the actions the U.S. Department of Agriculture has already taken to help our state recover. However, we urge you to consider requesting additional disaster relief funds that can immediately alleviate the overwhelming financial impact of this storm on Florida's agriculture industry.

We appreciate the time you have spent in our state and are especially grateful that you came to Florida's Heartland a week after Hurricane Irma struck to assess the initial damage to the agriculture industry for yourself. All of Florida's agriculture sustained significant crop losses and extensive structural damage from this storm, including specialty crops, nurseries, fruits and vegetables, sugar, dairy, and beef cattle. There isn't a citrus grove that wasn't affected, with some experiencing 100 percent loss of fruit – worse than anything the industry has experienced in over 20 years.

Agriculture is our state's second-largest economic driver and if we don't act quickly, these losses will have a detrimental impact on our state's economy for years to come. We stand ready to fulfill your request for additional funds for USDA's existing disaster assistance programs and for emergency funds that are needed to provide an immediate lifeline to Florida's citrus industry. We urge you to consider the following funding requests, which are based on initial FDACS damage estimates, to help offset the immense financial losses sustained by virtually every sector of Florida agriculture:

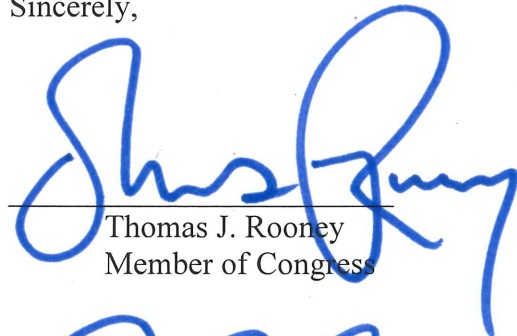
- ***Citrus***: \$760,816,000 in direct disaster payments to citrus growers, which could be administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and modeled after the 2004 Florida Hurricane Agriculture Disaster Assistance Program.
- ***Dairy***: \$11,811,695 in direct disaster payments to dairy producers, which could be administered by the FSA and modeled after the 2004 Florida Hurricane Agriculture Disaster Assistance Program.
- ***Fruits and Vegetables (Excluding Citrus)***: \$180,193,096 in disaster payments to address crop losses across the sector, irrigation and other infrastructure damage, debris removal, flood and water control damage, salinity and soil damage.

- **Beef Cattle:** \$237,467,562 in disaster relief funding to address significant loss of animals, loss of feed, damages to infrastructure, debris and erosion efforts.
- **Greenhouse, Nursery, and Floriculture:** \$624,819,895 in disaster payments to address significant crop losses, damages to greenhouses and related infrastructure, labor costs for storm preparation efforts as well as debris removal.
- **Sugar:** \$382,603,397 in disaster payments for losses of sugarcane production, the significantly higher cost of labor needed to salvage damaged and lodged sugarcane, and heavy infrastructure damage.
- **Field Crops:** \$62,747,058 in disaster relief to address crop losses due to wind damage, floods, which prevent timely harvest and are associated with spoilage.
- **Forestry:** \$261,280,000 in disaster relief to address the moderate to catastrophic damage, as well as complete timber losses suffered by this sector.
- **Aquaculture:** \$36,850,000 in disaster relief funding to address losses that occurred to aquaculture operations from loss of power, damages to infrastructure and equipment, and cleanup costs.


As Congress deliberates emergency supplemental measures, we stand ready to provide you with the additional resources and flexibility you need to adequately respond to the needs of Florida agriculture. After viewing the destruction to citrus yourself and hearing directly from the industry, you assured growers “generous,” “compassionate” and “quick” aid in response to Hurricane Irma. As we work together to adequately respond to this disaster, please understand that if the federal government doesn’t do something immediately – Florida orange juice as we know it could cease to exist.

We strongly believe a whole-of-government effort is necessary in this extremely rare situation in which an entire domestic industry is at risk of decimation. Thank you for your cooperation to date and for your dedication to United States agriculture.


Sincerely,




Thomas J. Rooney  
Member of Congress



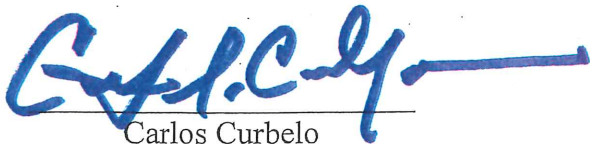
Dennis A. Ross  
Member of Congress



Mario Diaz-Balart  
Member of Congress



Darren Soto  
Member of Congress



Carlos Curbelo  
Member of Congress



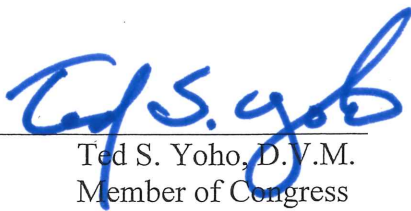
Francis Rooney  
Member of Congress



Ileana Ros-Lehtinen  
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Vern Buchanan  
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Ted S. Yoho, D.V.M.  
Member of Congress



Al Lawson  
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