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## **Indiana Farm Service Agency Authorizes 22 Counties for Emergency Grazing – Rokita-led Letter to USDA Helped Raise Issue to Ag Secretary**

(Washington, D.C.) – U.S. Rep. Todd Rokita (IN-4) today issued a statement on the announcement by the Indiana Farm Service Agency (FSA) that 22 counties have been authorized for emergency grazing under the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP):

*“I’m encouraged to see that the Farm Service Agency moved quickly to approve emergency grazing,” said Rokita. “The letter I led with other members of the Indiana delegation helped bring the concerns of our agriculture community to the attention of Secretary Vilsack, and I appreciate his attentiveness to the issue. The USDA and FSA’s quick response will be helpful to our livestock producers who are suffering due to the ongoing drought.”*

A list of the authorized counties is attached in a release from the Farm Service Agency.

Two weeks ago, Rokita led a [letter](#), also signed by U.S. Reps. Mike Pence, Larry Bucshon and Joe Donnelly, to Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack urging him to authorize the use of emergency haying and grazing on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands to provide relief from severe drought conditions for livestock producers.

According to the USDA, the CRP is a voluntary program available to agricultural producers to help them safeguard environmentally sensitive land. FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance in exchange for their establishing long-term, resource-conserving covers to improve the quality of water, control soil erosion and enhance wildlife habitat. Emergency haying and grazing of these lands may be authorized by the Secretary of Agriculture.

The CRP-authorizing legislation requires a payment reduction to be assessed during haying and grazing of CRP lands. CRP participants are assessed a haying or grazing payment reduction of 25 percent.

Earlier this week, [Vilsack announced](#) a relief package aimed at helping farmers and livestock producers affected by the drought. One part of that package reduced the payment reduction from 25 percent to 10 percent for emergency grazing on CRP lands, which Rokita hailed at the time as a “significant step for Hoosier farmers.” That step will likely make more land available for emergency grazing, including in the specific counties authorized today by the FSA.

Emergency haying and grazing of CRP acreage for use as a livestock food source may be authorized to provide relief to livestock producers in areas affected by a severe drought or similar natural disaster. Emergency authorization is provided by either a national FSA office authorization or by a state FSA committee determination utilizing the U.S. Drought Monitor.

The Midwest, including Indiana, is experiencing one of the driest crop seasons on record. According to [recent data](#), more than 99 percent of Indiana has been officially classified with drought conditions, and more than 80 percent is officially experiencing severe drought conditions. Depleted crops are increasing the costs to sustain livestock, and in turn increasing food costs for Hoosier families. Farm animals relying on these crops for food are in danger as supplies are depleted.

For more information on the CRP visit:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=crp>

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