

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1314

June 4, 2019

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1301 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Secretary Perdue:

I write to request additional information on your efforts to address the obstacles facing farming communities in Illinois's 14th District as planting windows for this season draw to a close.

Farmers in Illinois and across America are confronting the challenges posed by market uncertainty; falling crop prices; decreasing soybean, corn, and pork exports; and a rising tide of farm bankruptcies.¹ I have heard firsthand from farming families at home whose livelihoods are being devastated. In fact, the U.S. Department of Commerce reports that the personal income of farmers decreased by \$12.4 billion in the first quarter of 2019.² Meanwhile, according to the Illinois Farm Bureau, some of our farmers have decided not to plant any crops this year because they cannot be sure a market for what they grow will exist.³

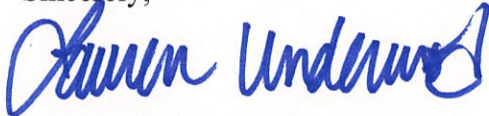
These threats to our farm communities are compounded by historic planting delays this year due to extreme weather and waterlogged soil.⁴ In Illinois, only 45 percent of corn has been planted, compared with a 98 percent five-year average, and only 21 percent of our soybean crop has been planted compared with an 84 percent five-year average.⁵

The farmers I represent in DeKalb, Huntley, Minooka, and so many other communities are optimistic, hardworking, and resilient. Farming is hard work, and they take its challenges in stride. I know from conversations with farmers in my district that what they want and desperately need is a free and fair market to sell the world-class crops they produce.

Therefore, I respectfully request a written update on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's efforts to aid agricultural communities that have been hurt by planting delays and tariffs. I sincerely appreciate the efforts you and your department have previously made to help farmers, such as implementation of the 2018 Market Facilitation Program. In your response, please include a detailed outline of the newly proposed 2019 plan to support farmers, including any additional information on allocation of the proposed \$16 billion in programs, and any additional ways you plan to address harm to the agricultural community.

Thank you for your efforts to expedite the 2019 plan, and your shared commitment to helping our farm communities prosper. I look forward to working together on behalf of Illinois farmers.

Sincerely,



Lauren Underwood

¹ Hiltzik, Michael. "Trump's trade war is wrecking America's farm economy." *LA Times*, May 13, 2019 (<https://www.latimes.com/business/hiltzik/la-fi-hiltzik-trump-trade-farmers-20190510-story.html>).

² "Personal Income and Outlays, April 2019." *Bureau of Economic Analysis*, May 31, 2019, U.S. Department of Commerce (https://www.bea.gov/system/files/2019-05/pi0419_0.pdf).

³ Stroisch, Deana. "Time is running out for many in agriculture." *Illinois Farm Bureau*, May 17, 2019 (http://www.ilfb.org/resources/ifb-in-action/time-is-running-out-for-many-in-agriculture/?fbclid=IwAR31mFa7KXW0StUiGG5xs67GDqErwu2JCh0UXWeAYo7IAB_kkh9umWvEa3k).

⁴ "Crop Progress." *National Agricultural Statistics Service*, June 3, 2019, U.S. Department of Agriculture, (<https://downloads.usda.library.cornell.edu/usda-esmis/files/8336h188j/wd3766076/j6731d80p/prog2319.pdf>); Van Dam, Andrew, Karklis, Laris and Meko, Tim. "After a biblical spring, this is the week that could break the Corn Belt." *The Washington Post*, June 4, 2019 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/2019/06/04/after-biblical-spring-this-is-week-that-could-break-corn-belt/?utm_term=.01bf05389bbb).

⁵ "Crop Progress." *National Agricultural Statistics Service*, June 3, 2019, U.S. Department of Agriculture (<https://downloads.usda.library.cornell.edu/usda-esmis/files/8336h188j/wd3766076/j6731d80p/prog2319.pdf>).