

Mississippi Farm Leaders Express Appreciation to Childers and Berry

Disaster Assistance Legislation Introduced in House

(Stoneville) --- Mississippi farm and agri-business leaders praised the efforts of Representatives Travis



Congressman Travis Childers, MS

Childers (MS) and Marion Berry (AR) for introducing legislation that holds the potential of delivering critical assistance to producers that suffered yield and quality losses in 2009's unprecedented barrage of heavy rain during harvest season.

The legislation, which was introduced in the House of Representatives, closely tracks companion legislation introduced in the U.S. Senate by Senators Thad Cochran (MS), Chairman Blanche Lincoln (AR), and Roger Wicker (MS).

“We appreciate Congressman Childers’s prompt response to this disaster that imperils the financial stability of producers and our rural communities as they attempt to manage the most widespread farm disaster I have seen in my lifetime,” said Grenada producer and agri-businessman Coley Bailey. “Working with Representative Berry and other Congressmen across the United States that has seen significant disaster losses, we hope that the outcome will help undergird a very unstable financial situation in agriculture, as producers attempt to obtain production loans in order to continue operating.”

In Mississippi, 79 of 82 counties have been granted primary disaster designations by the USDA based on a minimum 30 percent loss for at least one crop in each county. Agriculture economists at Mississippi State University (MSU) estimate that state crop losses are nearing \$485 million, exceeding 30 percent of the state’s overall crop value. Based on crop reports, MSU noted that nearly 64 percent of the state’s sweet potatoes, 50 percent of cotton, 44 percent of soybeans, and 41 percent of grain sorghum will also experience losses this year.

“In North Mississippi, both farmers and local economies have suffered from this season’s unprecedented rainfall,” said Childers. “Significant assistance currently available through the USDA is still not enough to make up for the incredible crop losses local producers have experienced. While we await the full implementation of Farm Bill assistance provisions, this important legislation will help local economies stay afloat by providing farmers with the resources they need to get back on their feet.”

Both the House and Senate versions of the legislation would deliver disaster assistance utilizing a delivery mechanism similar to Direct Payments. The legislation also includes \$650 million to assist specialty crop producers, \$150 million in assistance for livestock producers and \$42 million to aid first handlers of cottonseed.

Johnny Swayze, a producer from Benton, said, “Regardless of whether this legislation gets passed, the next two years will be painful for producers to try and recoup losses from the 2009 crop year. The important thing is this assistance, in many cases, will be the determining factor if many farmers even get the opportunity to dig out of the hole. That is how serious this situation is, and why we are so grateful for Congressman Childers, Senator Cochran, Senator Wicker, and our friends in Arkansas – Congressman Berry and Senator Lincoln – for leading the effort in the U.S. Congress.