

11/23/2015

The Honorable Nikki R Haley
Office of the Governor
1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Honorable Governor Nikki Haley,

We, the Board of Directors of the Marion County Farm Bureau, are writing you this letter, not just on behalf of the farmers, ranchers, agri-businessmen and lenders of Marion County, but on behalf of our entire community, our region, the Pee Dee, and our beloved state. You have of no doubt been informed of the historic flooding which occurred in our state in early October. What you may not know, however, is that we were affected by drought and heat prior to the flood, and since the flood, we have had even more rain, in fact, the City of Mullins and the area to its north-east had more rain on Wednesday, November the 4th than it had during the historic rainfall event in early October.

Our farmers know and expect to have to deal with adverse weather, high input costs, and fluctuating commodity prices. Farming is a way of life that is full of inherent risks, and we are fully aware of that. We take calculated risks each and every year that we farm, investing large amounts of capital on crops we haven't even planted yet. We make full use of the risk management tools available to us such as crop insurance, forward marketing, financing tools, commodity programs- in order to protect ourselves from the myriad of variables we face. That being said, no amount of planning could have prepared us for what happened this year. No amount of crop insurance available to us would be able to cover the losses incurred by many of our farmers. We are thankful for it, but to have such substantial losses across all of our crops has never happened like this in many of our lifetimes.

This disaster does not just affect our farmers, but our entire county. Marion County has always been an agricultural county, but even more so since we lost our textile industry in the nineties, leaving us with endemic unemployment. Peanuts, corn, soybeans, cotton, tobacco, cattle, swine and poultry bring in close to \$24 million in gross sales to our small county of 30 thousand people. This revenue is turned over far many more times in the county. Merchants, seed, fertilizer and equipment dealers, buying points, cotton gins, parts houses, fuel distributors, churches and schools all depend on the crops grown in our fields. These massive losses will have long term and far reaching negative impacts on an already economically depressed region.

Having said all of this, we are earnestly asking you to support direct disaster relief funding for our devastated ag economy. If immediate action is not taken, untold number of multi-generational family farms that are facing unprecedented financial strain will not be able to continue farming. The face of agriculture, not just in Marion but the entire state, will be changed forever for the worse and the negative economic impact could be felt for generations. Our state has not seen a disaster like this in many years. In times like these we look to the men and women whom we have elected to lead, to earnestly represent our interests and to seek help for the hurting. We trust that you will.

The Board of Directors of the Marion County Farm Bureau

Neal Baxley
Michael L. Poston
Aubrey White
Jimmy Hoot
James F. Huggins
Paul Moore
Archie Allison
Johnny Wiggins
Jay [unclear]
Gil Wiggins
Robert Drew

Dale
Boyd Owen