



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
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Help for Farmers

JEFFERSON CITY – Governor Nixon recently asked the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture to grant a disaster declaration for Missouri counties hit by heavy rains, strong winds and flooding earlier this year. In July, the governor asked the head of the USDA’s Farm Service Agency to conduct a damage assessment of all Missouri counties. FSA found that 28 counties suffered weather-related damages and could be eligible for federal help.

Several of the counties impacted by adverse weather are in the 18th Senate District, including Adair, Knox, Marion, Schuyler, Scotland and Shelby.

“Missouri farmers have suffered extraordinary hardships and losses from storms and flooding that occurred this spring and into the summer,” Governor Nixon said late last month. “Many of these weather conditions that caused a delay in planting and decreased yields are now affecting the pocketbooks of many farm families...and I hope that U.S. Secretary Vilsack will approve the assistance Missouri farmers need during this time.”

Those of us who live in northeast Missouri are well aware of the problems we’ve been facing because of the strong spring storms. Recovery has been slow, and the downturn in the economy has only made matters worse. I thank the governor for his support of our state’s number one industry and hope the federal government can help our farmers make a full recovery from the nasty weather they experienced this year.

There are currently 108,000 farms in Missouri, and the average size of our family farms is 269 acres. Missouri farmers produce close to \$5-million in crops each year; they raise 4,250,000 cattle, 3,100,000 hogs and 83,000 sheep. Missouri dairy farmers produce 1,615,000,000 pounds of milk each year. The Show Me State is currently 12th in the nation in the total value of agriculture products sold.

Due to the importance of farming in Missouri, Governor Nixon has announced a Governor's Conference on Agriculture will be held in St. Louis in January. The theme of the conference is "Think Outside the Barn," and participants will look to the future of agriculture, seeking new opportunities through innovation and technology. Some of the ideas that crop up at the conference may be turned into legislation since we have received assurances from Senate leaders that part of the 2010 session will focus on agriculture. Missouri's family farmers are the backbone of our state's economy, and we must make sure they have the tools they need to succeed.

If you have any questions or comments about this or any other issue, give my Capitol office a call at (573) 751-7852, send me an email at wes.shoemyer@senate.mo.gov, or drop a line to Room 434, State Capitol, 201 West Capitol Ave., Jefferson City, MO 65101.