

# U.S. Sen. Johnson: Sends letter to USDA requesting flexibility after record rainfall causes planting delays

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**WASHINGTON** — U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) and the Wisconsin congressional delegation have sent a letter to Department of Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, encouraging him to allow a one-time accommodation for Wisconsin farmers to give them flexibility for the harvest and grazing of certain crops. Excessive rain across much of the Midwest this spring and USDA harvest-time limitations have left farmers uncertain of what planting options to pursue this year.

“Dairy and livestock farmers in Wisconsin and across the Midwest are predicting substantial feed shortages this year due to winterkill of alfalfa and a planting season delayed by an unusually wet spring. Farmers still have the opportunity to recover from these challenges and plant crops that will allow them to put up feed for their livestock. However, USDA regulations are preventing farmers from being able to respond to these difficult growing conditions,” the members wrote. “We urge you to take swift action, within the next few weeks, to provide planting, harvesting, and grazing flexibility to farmers so that they can have certainty about their planting options and get their crops in the ground.”

Full text of the letter is below, and can also be found [here](#).

June 12, 2019

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

Dairy and livestock farmers in Wisconsin and across the Midwest are predicting substantial feed shortages this year due to winterkill of alfalfa and a planting season delayed by an unusually wet spring. Farmers still have the opportunity to recover from these challenges and plant crops that will allow them to put up feed for their livestock. However, USDA regulations are preventing farmers from being able to respond to these difficult growing conditions. We urge you to take swift action, within the next few weeks, to provide planting, harvesting, and grazing flexibility to farmers so that they can have certainty about their planting options and get their crops in the ground.

Excessive rain has soaked much of the Midwest this spring, and many farms are now over three weeks behind a typical planting schedule. Estimates predict an unusually large number of farmers in our states will be eligible to make prevented planting claims. However, USDA's timeframes following prevented planting do not address the needs of our livestock farmers, who need to get a crop suitable for livestock feed in and harvested well before the snow begins to fly, which can often happen before the allowed harvest dates.

We request that you move swiftly to address this problem by responding to the enclosed request from Wisconsin farmers for a one-time accommodation to allow flexibility for the harvest and grazing of cover crops on prevent plant acreage and to address the harvest time limitations hindering planting decisions for corn used for silage.

Quick action to address this issue within the next 30 days is critical. Farmers are making planning decisions now, and they need certainty, particularly in these challenging times. Farms that have held on during the very difficult conditions of

the past few years do not have the luxury of sourcing feed from off their farm, and the possibility of not being able to produce forage could be the deciding factor in shutting down their operation or selling their livestock.

Thank you for your urgent attention to this issue and action to provide farmers certainty as they make key decisions in the days and weeks to come.

Sincerely,

*Wisconsin Delegation*