

JENNIFFER GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN
PUERTO RICO

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
1529 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
(202) 225-2615 FAX: (202) 225-2154

SAN JUAN OFFICE:
157 AVENIDA DE LA CONSTITUCIÓN
ANTIGUO EDIFICIO DE MEDICINA TROPICAL
SEGUNDO PISO
SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO 00901
(787) 723-6333 FAX: (787) 729-7738

COMMITTEES:
NATURAL RESOURCES
SMALL BUSINESS
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-5400

September 25, 2017

The Honorable George Ervin "Sonny" Purdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Purdue,

The following letter is to request your Department's assistance with disaster relief efforts for Puerto Rico in the wake of Hurricane Maria. We have learned that some of the island's crops and livestock suffered catastrophic damages, leaving producers facing terrible losses, and municipalities with limited availability of food and resources as they recover from this crisis.

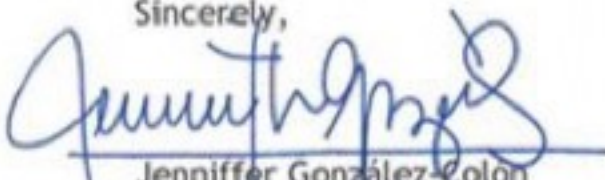
As you are probably aware, on September 20, President Trump issued a major disaster declaration for Puerto Rico as a result of the hurricane, which triggers the allocation of emergency funds. The Department of Agriculture (USDA) is authorized to designate counties as disaster areas for approval of Emergency Loans (EM) and make them available for producers that have suffered losses. In addition, the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers a variety of programs to assist those who have been impacted by natural disasters, including the Livestock Indemnity Program, Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program, Emergency Forest Restoration Program and the Tree Assistance Program that support the recovery of agricultural sectors from natural disasters.

Puerto Rico has an ample agricultural community that guarantees my constituents' immediate access to food supplies. Considering that numerous crops are completely flattened and neighboring islands that supply food to Puerto Rico are also affected, we need to ensure that remedial programs are timely accessible through your Department.

Some of these programs have been made available to states affected by natural disasters, similar to Hurricane Maria. It is crucial that Puerto Rico is prioritized considering the extent of the damages and that all relief programs and funds are fully extended to the island's 3.4 million U.S. citizens, as they would for the mainland. Puerto Ricans are resilient and have demonstrated great courage in the face of this crisis. I am confident the island will recover, but we cannot do it alone.

Furthermore, as Puerto Rico's sole representative in Congress, I urge you to help the Government of Puerto Rico by identifying further assistance and program eligibility for the restoration of the agricultural sector in Puerto Rico. Please do not hesitate to contact my Congressional Office should you identify a way in which we can help USDA accommodate our request.

Sincerely,


Jenniffer González-Colón
Member of Congress