



RON DESANTIS
GOVERNOR

February 7, 2022

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

On behalf of Florida's farmers and agricultural producers, I am requesting that you issue a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Disaster Declaration for counties impacted by freezing temperatures on January 29 through January 31, 2021. I am also requesting you make any and all assistance under the Farm Service Agency and other USDA programs available to farmers to help them recover.

In late January, temperatures in some portions of Central and South Florida dropped to their lowest in over a decade, damaging crops across the area during a key time in their development. In response, I declared a State of Emergency and deployed the Secretary of the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity and the Director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management to South Florida to survey the impacts on this vital sector of Florida's economy. Initial reports show a total loss in some areas, with lettuce, cabbage, green beans, radishes, and sweet corn being especially vulnerable to the sudden temperature drop.

This hard freeze follows over two years of above average rainfall, severe storms and winds, tropical cyclones, the significant economic disruption to all sectors of the economy wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic, and mounting inflationary pressures which may hinder access to necessary funding these farmers need. Florida is a major agricultural producer and exporter, with \$7.3 billion in agricultural products sold annually as of the latest USDA latest agricultural census. Agriculture makes up one of the largest portions of Florida's \$1.2 trillion gross domestic product, and it is vital that this engine of our economy have the resources they need to continue to operate.

I ask that the USDA move quickly to review and respond to this request and to approve all assistance programs available under the USDA and your federal counterparts. I look forward to working with your team to ensure Florida's farmers have access to all available funding during this difficult time. Please do not hesitate to contact my office for any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ron DeSantis".

Ron DeSantis
Governor