

Office of the Governor

PO BOX 004
TRENTON, NJ 08625

NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Jayne O'Connor
609-777-2600

RELEASE: October 1, 1999

Whitman Says Congress Is Turning Its Back on Farmers in Need House Approves Minimal Funding for Weather-Related Crop Loss

Gov. Christie Whitman today strongly criticized the U.S. House for failing to provide sufficient relief for farmers in New Jersey and across the nation who have suffered devastating crop loss as a result of severe drought and flood conditions. She urged Congress to provide a supplemental appropriation to ensure that adequate assistance is provided to those who have suffered from this year's disasters.

She lauded members of New Jersey's Congressional delegation who worked hard to secure adequate funds and opposed the final Agriculture Appropriations bill because it included insufficient funding.

"I am very disappointed that Congress has failed to provide the necessary level of emergency assistance that is desperately needed by farmers in New Jersey and across the nation. These farmers have felt staggering crop losses as a result of the severe drought of the summer and the violent flooding over the past month," said Gov. Whitman. "New Jersey's small farms and our family farmers needed this federal assistance to help them recover from crop losses topping \$80 million. The bill passed by the U.S. House today was woefully inadequate."

"This year New Jersey suffered the worst drought we have seen in thirty years, topped off by Hurricane Floyd's torrential rains and flooding," said the Governor. "Emergency federal assistance is essential to ensuring that the Garden State will be green once again."

"This bill does not even begin to address the unprecedented losses felt by farmers in New Jersey, throughout the East Coast, and up and down the Eastern Seaboard. I urge Congress to provide supplemental funding for those affected by recent natural disasters, especially those devastated by Hurricane Floyd."

The \$8.7 billion bill adopted by the House today includes only \$1.2 billion in emergency aid for crop loss from all weather-related disasters, including the drought and Hurricanes Dennis and Floyd. It is estimated that drought-related crop loss on the East Coast alone will top \$2.5 billion. Crop losses in Midwestern states that were also hit by natural disasters is expected to total another \$2.5 billion. Crop damage along the Eastern seaboard from Hurricane Floyd is still being tallied.

Gov. Whitman began appealing to Congressional leadership and the President in August, asking them to ensure that adequate federal assistance would be provided to help farmers recover from the drought. Most recently, she spearheaded an effort by nine eastern Governors appealing to Congressional

leadership for greater assistance to east coast farmers effected by recent natural disasters. A copy of the letter signed by the nine governors is attached.

