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NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Requests Federal Natural Disaster Designation For Farmers In Atlantic And Cumberland Counties

Gov. Christie Whitman in a letter today to US. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Dan Glickman requested a comprehensive natural disaster designation for New Jersey farmers in Atlantic and Cumberland counties as a result of severe flooding caused by high winds and excessive rains on August 20 and 21.

A USDA disaster declaration would make farmers in the two counties eligible to apply for low-interest emergency loans from the USDA, farm credit programs offered through USDA's Farm Service Agency and for any other relief made available through the USDA.

In her letter, the Governor noted that, "Estimates of losses to Atlantic and Cumberland county farmers indicate that at least 15,750 acres on 650 farms sustained crop damage ranging from less than 20 to 100 percent, and damages in excess of \$1.5 million to land and other related facilities."

Whitman cautioned that "the full impact of potential damages to farms located in other counties in the region has not yet been determined. It may become necessary to request the inclusion of additional counties in the declaration should those damage assessments support such action."

The Governor's request was based on damage assessments reports prepared by the USDA's State Emergency Board. The reports reflected damage to a wide variety of crops including squash, lettuce and other greens, peppers, tomatoes, blueberries, sweet potatoes and corn.

