



June 3, 2026

The Honorable Brooke L. Rollins
Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Madam Secretary,

On behalf of the farmers and local communities we represent, we respectfully write to ask that you grant the request of New York Governor Kathy Hochul to issue a Secretarial Disaster Designation for counties located in New York State's Hudson Valley, Capital Region, Central New York, Southern Tier and Western New York in response to the devastating crop damage and loss recently experienced by farmers across these regions. The fruit, vegetable and specialty crop growers in these regions experienced significant crop damage and economic impacts in excess of \$30 million, due to a combination of extreme weather conditions in April – unseasonably high temperatures that caused an early bloom, immediately followed by an unprecedented frost that has devastated orchards, vineyards, and fruit production.

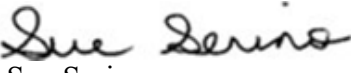
Farms in our region of the Mid-Hudson Valley were particularly hard hit, with many losing as much as 90 percent of their crops, creating financial hardship for these farm businesses and their families and workers. If approved, the Disaster Designation requested by New York State on May 20 will provide a critical tool to help these farmers access USDA low-interest emergency loans, provided eligibility requirements are met. This capital, coupled with crop insurance and other relief programs, will ensure they have the essential resources they need to recover their business operations and care for their families.


Ulster, Orange, and Dutchess Counties are among the largest producers of apples in the state and in the country, as well as important producers of pears, stone fruit, grapes, and strawberries. Our local economy depends heavily on agriculture to provide local jobs, sustain local cideries and wineries, support tourism, and feed people at home and beyond. For our farms to recover from this devastating weather-related disaster, they need the support that only a Secretarial Disaster Designation can provide. This Disaster Designation will help ensure the viability of our farms in the wake of their losses, which will support the economy of our rural communities that is dependent upon the health of the farming sector.

Thank you for your consideration of our request and your attention to this urgent matter. We welcome the opportunity to partner with you and the Department to address this critical need and continue serving our residents.

Sincerely,


Jennifer Metzger
Ulster County Executive


Sue Serino
Dutchess County Executive


Steve Neuhaus
Orange County Executive

Cc: U.S. Representative Pat Ryan, U.S. Representative Josh Riley, U.S. Representative Mike Lawler, Governor Kathy Hochul, NYS Agriculture & Markets Commissioner Richard Ball