



HENRY DARGAN McMASTER  
GOVERNOR

November 8, 2024

The Honorable Lindsey Graham  
The Honorable Tim Scott  
The Honorable Nancy Mace  
The Honorable Joe Wilson  
The Honorable Jeff Duncan

The Honorable William Timmons  
The Honorable Ralph Norman  
The Honorable James E. Clyburn  
The Honorable Russell Fry

Dear Lady and Gentlemen,

Thank you again for your strong, continuing response to the devastation of Hurricane Helene. Our people are recovering, but some are being missed because of gaps in the system: those in agribusiness – farms and forests. They need a federal appropriation.

No two hurricanes are the same and Helene was a strong one. But when Helene's high winds and rain arrived on September 26, they were preceded by a flash drought beginning in May and Tropical Storm Debby in August. Crops were already damaged and then the tree roots lost their grip in the wet soil. We lost power lines, but also power poles, snapped by fallen trees. Roads were blocked for days by tree trunks and limbs entangled in live power lines, awaiting the heroic efforts of line crews. Power outages lasted for so long that people ran out of gas because convenience stores could not pump gas.

This triple punch of drought, wind, and rain had a strong impact on everything it touched, especially farms and forests. The catastrophic winds, flooding, and prolonged power outages caused extensive damage to crops, poultry, livestock, equipment, timberland, and infrastructure. The storm's impact has been felt across every sector of agribusiness in South Carolina.

Our agribusiness industry is accustomed to managing risk and has implemented many available risk management tools, but the unprecedented scale of damage from these weather events has overwhelmed the capacity of existing support systems. For these reasons, I request your support in securing federal appropriations to assist in the recovery of our agribusiness industry.

Agribusiness—including agriculture and forestry, family farms, livestock producers, food processors, and wood product manufacturers – is our state's largest industry, contributing \$51.8 billion in annual economic impact and supporting over 259,000 jobs. We must support the recovery of our farmers.

The Clemson Cooperative Extension and the South Carolina Forestry Commission have conducted extensive outreach and gathered comprehensive data from affected producers. Their estimates place the total financial damage to South Carolina's agribusiness industry at \$621 million, much of which is not covered by crop insurance or any permanent federal program. This figure includes losses from multiple "acts of God" events, including droughts, Tropical Storm Debby, and Hurricane Helene. The breakdown of these losses is as follows:

**Hurricane Helene:**

- Crop and Livestock Loss: \$65.3 million
- Agricultural Infrastructure Loss: \$193 million
- Timber Loss: \$194 million

**Tropical Storm Debby:**

- Crop and Livestock Loss: \$133.2 million
- Agricultural Infrastructure Loss: \$4.7 million

**Drought:**

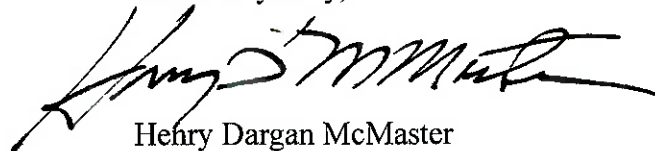
- Crop and Livestock Loss: \$31.3 million

To address these disasters effectively, I urge you to support an emergency relief package structured as a block grant, allowing the South Carolina Department of Agriculture to efficiently manage and deploy these resources, avoiding unnecessary delays.

These staggering losses represent a critical blow to an industry already contending with rising inflation, labor shortages, and market pressures. The future of hundreds of agricultural operations is at risk, and without timely intervention, we face the prospect of long-term harm to the livelihoods of families who sustain our rural communities and contribute significantly to South Carolina's prosperity and heritage.

I look forward to working with you to secure the necessary federal appropriations to aid in our recovery and ensure the resilience of our state's agribusiness industry. Thank you.

Yours very truly,



Henry Dargan McMaster

cc: South Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture  
South Carolina State Forester  
South Carolina Senate President  
South Carolina Senate Finance Committee Chairman  
South Carolina Speaker of the House  
South Carolina House Ways and Means Chairman