COLORADO

Department of Agriculture

(/)

Gov. Polis and Commissioner Greenberg Request USDA Disaster Declaration

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Broomfield, Colo. - Gov. Jared Polis and Commissioner of Agriculture Kate Greenberg today requested a USDA Secretarial Disaster Declaration

(https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eNQawWvAMKagC8zv1UxnYd_OVm_FeVSK/view?usp=sharing) for Colorado's Western Slope counties impacted by a late season hard freeze event that occurred on April 13, 2020. Temperatures on Colorado's western slope hit a low of 19 degrees, potentially decimating 95 percent of this year's peach crop.

"Colorado's iconic and delicious Palisade peaches could be devastated by this early freeze and fruit producers on the Western Slope need support. Coloradans always look forward to getting Palisade peaches that help support our economy, growers and small businesses," said Governor Polis. "We urge the federal government to assist Colorado's agriculture community during this challenging time."

The declaration is necessary for Colorado producers to access critical programs and assistance in the face of significant fruit crop losses and reduction in harvest this season.

"Colorado's fruit growers have been dealt a double blow -- their current economic and labor challenges have now been compounded by an early season freeze event," said Commissioner Greenberg. "We are committed to garnering as much support as possible at the state and federal levels to help our farmers make it through this season and keep getting the food we love on the table well into the future."

Colorado Senators Michael Bennet and Cory Gardner together with Congressman Scott Tipton issued a collective letter of support (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1w_dFywITCwXA87Pg6JdHHeZSuVukUbhe/view?usp=sharing) for the declaration request, writing "During an already disruptive time in our economy, additional stresses and disruptions in the food supply cannot be taken lightly. While Colorado farmers work to assess the true impact and damage from the freeze, initial reports show that at least half of the produce crop on the Western Slope of Colorado has been lost at the best, and total crop loss is a distinct possibility. We ask for your support of Colorado farmers as they work through the fallout of this weather event, and respectfully urge you to grant the request of Governor Polis to issue a Secretarial Disaster Declaration."

Colorado's Western Slope produces pears, apples, apricots, cherries, grapes, and peaches among other agriculture products. Peaches account for over 75 percent of fruit production in Colorado. The peach industry on Colorado's Western Slope produces 17,000 tons of fruit and brings in nearly $40 million, serving as a key economic driver of Mesa, Delta, Montrose and Montezuma counties.

The Colorado Department of Agriculture exists to support the state's agriculture industry and serve the people of Colorado through regulation, advocacy and education. Our mission is to strengthen and advance Colorado agriculture, promote a safe and high-quality food supply, protect consumers, and foster responsible stewardship of the environment and natural resources.

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