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NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

(R.—Kans.)

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DOLE URGES ACTION ON DROUGHT DISASTER AID WIRES GOVERNOR, AND STATE ASCS DIRECTOR

WASHINGTON, D. C. -- Senator Bob Dole yesterday urged prompt action by local, state and Federal officials to obtain assistance as needed for farmers and stockmen hard hit by serious drought conditions plaguing Kansas.

Dole urged action on two fronts, both to help eligible farmers secure low-interest disaster loans and also to help implement a disaster livestock feeding program where conditions may warrant it.

Dole said he had wired Kansas Governor Robert Docking, suggesting that reports from local county governments in affected areas be solicited promptly so that a determination can be made whether to request the Secretary of Agriculture to declare a disaster declaration. "In this most serious drought condition affecting people all over our State," Dole wrote, "the cooperation of government at all levels is not only desirable, it is absolutely essential." Under Federal natural disaster laws, the Governor must initiate a natural disaster declaration request to the Department of Agriculture after receiving requests from individual counties within the State.

Under the loan program, Dole said, eligible farmers are entitled to loans at 5% interest to cover their losses resulting from natural disasters. A provision requiring the Farmers Home Administration to refuse such loans, if individuals were able to find commercial credit at higher interest rates, was deleted earlier this year under an amendment introduced by Senator Dole and subsequently signed into law. The amendment eliminated the so-called "credit elsewhere" rule which had made these loans far more difficult to obtain in the past.

Dole said he was also hopeful that, in any counties where grass has dried-up and forage is short, local county officers would promptly certify the need to the State ASCS director so that emergency livestock feeding programs could begin. Under established procedures, the State ASCS director will make application to the Secretary of Agriculture for the distribution of USDA grains to eligible producers whose forage or feed supplies have been damaged. Dole said he had written State ASCS Director Frank Mosier urging him to make inquiries of the county officers on the needs in their area.

Under the program, 10 pounds of grain or 12 pounds of oats per head per day can be made available to producers declared eligible. In the event the commodities themselves are not available, credit can be extended to cover equivalent expenses for feed. The emergency feeding program is available both to producers with cow/calf herds and those with feeder operations, provided the producer has operated six months or longer.