

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 26, 2008

The Honorable Ed Schafer
Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Schafer,

It is our understanding that you have received a letter from Florida Governor Charlie Crist on behalf of Charles Bronson, Commissioner of Florida's Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

As you may know, freezing temperatures in parts of Florida in January caused significant damage to some of our agricultural commodities. Portions of Hillsborough County, which we represent, were particularly impacted by the near to below-freezing temperatures January 1 to 3, 2008. Strawberries and tropical fish sustained significant damage. The freeze caused a 30% loss to the strawberry crop and losses to tropical fish farms range from 30%-90% in Hillsborough County. The United States Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency corroborates these loss estimates.

Therefore, we respectfully urge a primary disaster declaration for Hillsborough County so the affected producers may be eligible for any disaster assistance that is currently available or will be available in the future. This is a critically important step the Federal government should take to help our constituents who have been harmed by this freeze.

We would appreciate your prompt and favorable attention to this matter. Please contact either of us if you have any questions or want to discuss this issue.

Sincerely,



Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress



Adam H. Putnam
Member of Congress