

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 23, 2026

The Honorable Scott Hutchins, Undersecretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Undersecretary Hutchins,

We write to express our concerns regarding the reliability of data reports from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Farmers need reliable USDA data to make critical decisions on what to plant, how to manage risks, and when to market their agricultural products. Given the importance of reliable USDA data to farmers, ranchers, and rural communities, it is critical that USDA maintain the quality and integrity of its data.

In January 2026, USDA revised its harvested corn acreage estimate for the 2025 crop year from its initial June 2025 estimate of 86.8 million acres to 91.3 million acres. While refinements to estimates are expected as a growing season wraps up, such a large increase in these estimates resulted in grain prices dropping more than 5 percent at a time when the farm economy is already strained. In addition, a delayed June 2025 quarterly trade report excluded important qualitative analysis typically included in past reports—USDA has not restored that analysis in any subsequent update.

Issues like this have led to an erosion of trust in USDA data in the agricultural community. A January 2026 *Farm Journal* survey of farmers, retailers, and economists indicates that 73 percent of farmers and 78 percent of agricultural retailers are less confident in USDA data now than they were in the past.

This erosion of trust in USDA data comes after a loss of over 30 percent of National Agricultural Statistical Service (NASS) employees and nearly 25 percent of Farm Service Agency (FSA) employees, the agencies responsible for estimating and collecting data of crop acres planted and harvested, in the first half of 2025 alone. USDA's proposed reorganization threatens to worsen the loss of key institutional knowledge and staff capacity. Further, the department has not yet indicated whether it will protect employees at statistical agencies from receiving Schedule Policy/Career designations which could suggest the political control of data products. Such potential designations would undermine the agencies' objective and nonpartisan responsibilities.

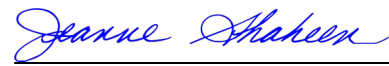
We ask that you please describe the steps you are taking within the Research, Education, and Economics mission area to ensure that farmers, ranchers, and producers can rely on the data issued by USDA, including copies of any internal reviews conducted on data reports and data quality. Additionally, please outline how your agencies are working to improve producer survey response rates and supplement responses with any additional data sources.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator  
Ranking Member, Committee  
on Agriculture, Nutrition, and  
Forestry



Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator  
Ranking Member,  
Subcommittee on  
Agriculture, Rural  
Development, Food and Drug  
Administration, and Related  
Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations



Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



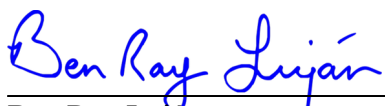
Tina Smith  
United States Senator



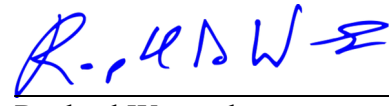
Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



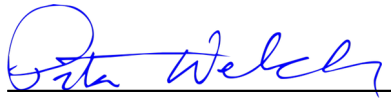
Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan  
United States Senator

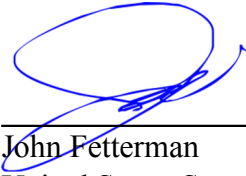


Raphael Warnock  
United States Senator



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Peter Welch  
United States Senator



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John Fetterman  
United States Senator



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Adam B. Schiff  
United States Senator



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Elissa Slotkin  
United States Senator