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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205

February 16, 2016

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

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

I write to request that your office assist the small grain producers in New York State to obtain crop insurance for barley for all counties in which production is feasible. Although barley crop insurance is currently available in twenty eight counties, there are many producers outside these areas that would benefit from a crop protection program. While New York barley production has grown slowly but steadily to 12,000 planted acres over the previous four years, this number is much lower than historical levels when New York barley production accounted for more than 69 percent of all domestic production.

There has been a 72 percent increase in farm based breweries, cideries, and distilleries in New York since 2011, which has created significant demand for barley and other small grains. In order to sustain this robust industry and improve the viability of our farms and farming communities, it is important that barley and other grains are available. A key to encouraging growers to plant these crops is to ensure that they can manage their risk with appropriate crop protection programs.

In the future I hope that your office will continue to work with New York researchers and producers to go further and establish crop insurance program for malting barley. Expanding the current barley crop and developing a more robust production history will enable insurers to create an actuarially sound program for malting barley that will afford additional protection to growers of this valuable crop that already covers nearly 2,000 acres of New York farmland.

I thank you for your efforts on behalf of New York small grain growers, brewers, distillers, and consumers to ensure the continued growth of this important sector of our agricultural economy.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator