

OKLAHOMA CITY — Gov. Brad Henry has asked the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture to issue a federal disaster designation in all 77 Oklahoma counties to assist farmers and ranchers. In a letter sent Thursday, Henry told Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsak that extreme weather and drought conditions have caused serious damage and losses to Oklahoma's agriculture and ranching industries. The letter noted that summer and fall crops, hay forages, livestock grazing lands, and alfalfa have been particularly hard-hit. Henry asked that federal officials authorize the Farm Service Agency to complete damage assessment reports for a period from Nov. 1, 2009, to Oct. 31. If approved, Oklahoma farmers and ranchers will be eligible for low-interest loans to address losses caused by the extreme weather conditions.