

OKLAHOMA CITY — Gov. Brad Henry said federal aid has been approved for farmers and ranchers in 72 Oklahoma counties who suffered damage because of drought, extreme heat and high winds over the past year. Henry announced the aid package on Wednesday.

It means farmers and ranchers in the counties are eligible for low-interest loans to cover their losses. In a letter to the governor, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack said loss assessments indicated there was enough damage to merit a primary disaster declaration in 58 counties. Under federal regulations, another 14 contiguous counties also qualify. Last month, Gov. Henry requested an agricultural disaster declaration for all 77 Oklahoma counties. The only counties that will not receive federal aid are Craig, Kay, Nowata, Ottawa and Washington counties.