

**SUBJECT:** Using disaster contingency fund to assist agricultural producers

**COMMITTEE:** Agriculture and Livestock — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 4 ayes — Miller, Anderson, Aycock, Heflin  
0 nays — None  
3 absent — B. Brown, Gallego, Garcia

**SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, May 1 — 31-0, on Local and Uncontested Calendar

**WITNESSES:** None

**BACKGROUND:** The disaster contingency fund was created by the 70th Legislature in 1987. As outlined in Government Code, sec. 418.073, the fund is used in instances when regular appropriations do not cover the costs incurred by state and local agencies in responding to a disaster. The governor may provide funding from the disaster contingency fund with the concurrence of the rest of the disaster emergency funding board. The board comprises the governor, the lieutenant governor, the commissioner of insurance, the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission, and the director of the Governor’s Division of Emergency Management.

**DIGEST:** SB 1339 would amend Government Code, sec. 418.073 to make money in the disaster contingency fund available for distribution to a state or local agency to assist agricultural producers affected by a disaster caused by a severe drought or wildfire.

The bill would define “agricultural products” as any farm or ranch product, including horticultural, viticultural, forestry, dairy, livestock, exotic livestock, poultry, and bee products.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect August 27, 2007.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** SB 1339 would create a mechanism to provide assistance for agricultural producers in Texas struggling to recover from devastating natural

disasters. In recent years, severe droughts and wildfires have plagued Texas to the detriment of the state's agricultural producers. Currently, no provision exists to provide financial assistance to agricultural producers affected by or recovering from a disaster caused by droughts or wildfires. As a result, Texas must rely on the federal government to assist agricultural producers in such circumstances.

Rather than establishing a new fund, SB 1339 would stipulate that money in the existing disaster contingency fund could be distributed to a state or local agency to assist agricultural producers. The governor and several state agencies maintain oversight of the disaster contingency fund, ensuring supervision over the process of distributing state assistance to agricultural producers when needed.

OPPONENTS  
SAY:

No apparent opposition.