

WASHINGTON - U.S. Reps. Jo Bonner (R-AL) and Collin Peterson (D-MN), along with 24 of their House colleagues, introduced legislation Wednesday night designed to provide almost \$4 billion worth of economic assistance to agricultural producers for losses from hurricane and other weather related causes in 2005.

The "Emergency Agricultural Disaster Assistance Act of 2006," H.R. 5099, is the related House legislation to S. 2438, the bipartisan agriculture disaster assistance legislation, which was included with some modifications by the Senate in its most recent supplemental appropriations bill.

"Over the last year, agricultural producers have experienced widespread devastation. Last year's hurricanes were especially difficult for our producers along the Gulf Coast," said Bonner, who is a member of the House Committee on Agriculture.

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"Our agriculture community consists of proud, patriotic Americans. They love this country and do not complain when Mother Nature deals them a bad hand; they just keep working hard to try to make the best of a bad situation."

"As grateful as I am to the American people for their assistance to the disaster victims of the worst hurricane season in U.S. history, I am also reminded that our agriculture community continues to be the one group of Americans left behind from all the assistance already appropriated," Bonner said.

Assistance will be provided to producers of cotton, specialty crops, and nursery crops as well as sugarcane and dairy producers in hurricane affected counties. Tree producers who suffered losses will also receive assistance under the Tree Assistance Program (TAP).

Currently, TAP provides emergency assistance to the agriculture industry; however, nurseries are not included.

Under this legislation, TAP will include Christmas, ornamental, nursery and potted trees as well as bushes, shrubs, and vines.

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