



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

GARLIN GILCHRIST II  
LT. GOVERNOR

August 2, 2024

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
U.S. Secretary of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave. SW  
Room 200-A, Administration Building  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

Consistent with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) policy, I write to inform you of the current sweet cherry situation in Michigan. As a result of increasingly unpredictable weather and this year's convergence of multiple systems, Michigan is experiencing a natural disaster for sweet cherry production.

Since April 1<sup>st</sup>, there has been significant rainfall across sweet cherry growing counties, including nearly 13 inches of rainfall in northwest lower Michigan. Higher insect populations because of the mild winter were met with a warm, wet, and very humid spring and early summer, causing an explosion of not only Spotted Wing Drosophila (SWD), but rapid development of fungi, including Cherry Leaf Spot and American Brown Rot. Crop protection measures with safety and legal parameters were not sufficient, particularly when windy conditions furthered hindrance of their effectiveness. Mid-to-late growing season estimates of crop loss across the significant sweet cherry growing counties range between 30% and 75%.

Sweet cherry production has been negatively impacted beginning April 1, 2024, and continuing, in the following Michigan counties:

Leelanau County; Antrim County; Grand Traverse County; Benzie County; Manistee County; Oceana County; Mason County; Berrien County; Van Buren County.

Damage Assessment information is being collected by the USDA Farm Service Agency and will be forwarded to your office as soon as it is available after October 1, 2024. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gretchen Whitmer".

Gretchen E. Whitmer  
Governor of Michigan