The livestock industry is a significant contributor to the U.S. economy. The U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM) helps ranchers and federal agencies monitor drought and make informed management decisions.

- The U.S. livestock industry contributes revenue exceeding $100 billion per year to the GDP.
- The U.S. is the world’s largest producer of beef, used for domestic consumption and international export.
- 1.9 million metric tons of beef were exported in 2016.

The U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM) helps ranchers and federal agencies monitor drought and make informed management decisions.

- Cattle production accounted for $78 billion in revenue (2015) representing 21% of total revenue from agricultural commodities.
- The USDM is created through a partnership between NOAA’s National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI), NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center (CPC), the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC).
- Droughts are ranked on a severity scale from D0 (abnormally dry) to D4 (exceptional drought).

Applications & value of the USDM:

- Ranchers use the USDM to assess how drought conditions will affect the market price of feed and livestock.
- Ranchers monitor the USDM to see if they are eligible for relief under government sponsored drought relief programs.
- Ranchers compare their own observations with drought conditions depicted by the USDM.

The USDM is created using a variety of data products, including NCEI’s drought, temperature, and rainfall data.

- The USDM is used by ranchers and federal agencies to make informed decisions regarding feed supply and herd size during drought. This information is important as drought affects forage and crop growth, the food supply of livestock.

Federal Agencies:

- Using the USDM’s set drought severity categories (D0-D4) means less bureaucracy and faster relief allocation.
- Under the Livestock Forage Program, the USDA paid out $2.7 billion (2015) to ranchers suffering drought-related forage losses.
- Using the USDM as a trigger for USDA’s relief programs replaces the need for costly, independent drought assessments.