

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 1, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

As the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) implements its \$3 billion commitment to purchase fresh food for food banks and community organizations, we write to urge the Department to ensure as much of this food as possible is locally sourced and procured from small and mid-sized producers. These purchases are a critical component of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) and will make a tremendous difference to those confronting food insecurities during the COVID-19 pandemic. If executed with an emphasis on purchasing from small, family farms, CFAP could also be a vital lifeline to these producers who have lost markets and supply chains needed to remain financially viable.

We know you share our belief that small farms are the backbone of our nation. They comprise the vast majority of agriculture businesses, sustain our rural economies, and feed their fellow Americans from coast to coast. Their ability to weather the current crisis is critical to sustaining our food supply, both now and in the years ahead. Unfortunately, many of them lack the financial infrastructure of large-scale agriculture operations. With the closure of everything from restaurants to farmers markets, commodity prices falling, and the absence of other revenue sources like agritourism, smaller producers are having an especially hard time making ends meet. Recent years of economic instability in the agricultural sector have only exacerbated this current challenge.

As the USDA works with distributors and wholesalers on the CFAP Distribution and Purchase component in the days and weeks ahead, we ask that you take a strategic approach that will ensure the amount of fruits, vegetables, dairy, and meats purchased from small and mid-sized producers is maximized. It is also imperative to the long-term health of our food supply chain that, to the fullest extent possible, these producers be identified based upon their proximity to the intended charitable organization recipients. By using this program to link food banks with farmers located within approximately one hundred miles of their facilities, the USDA can help foster invaluable connections between producers and those who are food insecure. This would help the program best support those on both ends of the food supply chain.

Please extend our gratitude to all USDA employees who are working diligently to support American agriculture during this pandemic. We stand ready to partner with you to guarantee the success of CFAP.

Sincerely,



Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress

Darren Soto
Member of Congress

Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

Joe Courtney
Member of Congress

Chris Pappas
Member of Congress

Andy Kim
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Peter Welch
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Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Jared Huffman
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Tom Malinowski
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Tim Ryan
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Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

