



# Duckworth, Colleagues Urge USDA To Target Coronavirus Food Assistance Program Relief To Local Farmers

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WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) joined U.S. Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Susan Collins (R-ME) and Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and a bipartisan group of 23 Senators in urging the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to target relief through its newly-created Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) to reach local farmers. While the bipartisan CARES Act stimulus that Senator Duckworth voted to pass specifically provides direct assistance to local food producers, USDA has not yet announced details on how this relief will be targeted to local farmers.

“While USDA mentioned that the direct producer assistance program would be made available to producers of all sizes – including local producers, as required by the CARES Act – we are disappointed that there were no specific details on how this assistance will be tailored to the unique challenges that local producers face, or how the Department will conduct outreach to beginning and underserved farmers,” the wrote the Senators in a [letter](#) to USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue.

The Senators are also specifically urging USDA to support local farmers by:

1. Adjusting the CFAP payment calculations to better reflect the business models of local producers;
2. Amending the covered time period to better reflect when local producers experienced losses; and
3. Developing a robust and inclusive outreach plan to ensure all local food producers – including those with limited internet access and those for whom English is not their first language – are aware of the benefits available to them under the CFAP.

“While we appreciate USDA’s efforts to implement the CFAP with local food producers in mind, we encourage you to incorporate these recommendations as you finalize the CFAP program to ensure local producers are able to participate. By adjusting the mechanism USDA uses to calculate CFAP payments for local food producers, changing the covered time period to reflect those losses experienced after April 15, 2020, and implementing a robust and inclusive outreach plan to reach all local food producers, including new farmers, we can help minimize the significant burden COVID-19 has placed on our local producers,” the Senators continued.

The Senators also pressed USDA for information it has yet to provide on how it will conduct outreach to ensure the participation of beginning, underserved, and local food producers in the direct producer assistance program. They urged USDA once again to develop a robust outreach plan that provides technical assistance and ensures local farmers are able to participate in the direct producer assistance program.

Last month, the Senators sent an initial letter urging the Trump Administration to provide relief for local farmers who are struggling, and pushed USDA to ensure that a portion of the \$9.5 billion they secured in the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act*, goes to local farmers who sell directly to consumers, schools, institutions, food hubs, regional distribution centers, retail markets, farmers markets and restaurants. USDA has yet to respond.

In addition to Duckworth, Brown, Collins and Stabenow, the letter was also signed by Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Bob Casey (D-PA), Kristen Gillibrand (D-NY), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Angus King (I-ME), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Joe Manchin (D-WV), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Patty Murray (D-WA), Jack Reed (D-RI), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Tina Smith (D-MN), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Mark Warner (D-VA), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), and Ron Wyden (D-OR).