

# **Durbin Joins Illinois Stewardship Alliance To Discuss Relief For Local Farmers During COVID-19 Pandemic**

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SPRINGFIELD – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) today joined a conference call with members of the Illinois Stewardship Alliance to discuss issues faced by small and local farmers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Durbin highlighted his support for increasing financial assistance that is tailored to local farmers who sell directly to consumers, schools, institutions, food hubs, regional distribution centers, retail markets, farmers markets, and restaurants.

Congress provided \$16 billion within the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act* for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to issue Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) payments to farmers experiencing pandemic hardship, explicitly reserving a portion of these funds to help those farmers who supply local markets. But USDA has failed to act. Durbin supports tailoring USDA CFAP payments to help more local farmers.

“Today I heard directly from small and local Illinois farmers about the serious financial difficulties they are experiencing during the pandemic. Congress empowered USDA to support these farmers, but many are still waiting to see relief dollars or are having to

jump through hoops to qualify for them. I will continue to urge USDA to act on this specific instruction from Congress so it can give financial support to local food producers who provide so much to their communities,” Durbin said.

In April, Durbin [wrote](#) to the USDA urging the Department to ensure relief is getting to local farmers and pressing for direct payments through the Farm Service Agency in response to the local food industry’s projected \$1.1 billion loss in revenue.