

# **Durbin Joins Central Illinois Young Farmers To Discuss Food Supply Protection 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 National Young Farmers Coalition Central Illinois Chapter to discuss their experiences as young farmers working during the COVID-19 pandemic and how they’ve supported food access in their communities. Durbin is an original cosponsor of the Food Supply Protection Act, a bill that would help strengthen the food supply chain, protect workers, reduce food waste, and support both farmers and families in need.

“It was great to speak with Central Illinois’ young farmers today and hear how they’ve been managing during these challenging times. The COVID-19 pandemic has tested

Illinois farmers in a variety of ways, but they are stepping up and providing support to the towns and communities they serve. It's time for Congress to do the same by passing additional assistance to small and local farms and increases in federal funding for food access programs," Durbin said.

Durbin also discussed 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.

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.

In July, Durbin introduced a bill to address hunger needs during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond by requiring USDA to expand online Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) purchasing choices by enabling additional retailers to participate in the program. The [Expanding SNAP Options Act](#) would provide funding for the creation of a universal online and app-based portal to make access to nutritious foods from the full variety of SNAP retailers possible and easy to navigate for consumers. Online SNAP purchasing is currently limited to a very small number of approved retailers due to technological and financial barriers, and in many states the only options are Walmart and Amazon.