

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 11, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy,

The security of our nation's food supply has been cast into doubt as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the massive scale of the crisis, we urge you to include support for our food system in upcoming legislation. The CARES Act signed into law on March 27, 2020 provided support for agriculture, however the month of April revealed the full extent of the devastation. It is clear that more needs to be done to support the farms and networks that feed American every day.

On April 17, 2020 the U.S. Department of Agriculture released plans for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), a \$19 billion program to provide direct assistance to producers and provide food for those in need. Although this aid is helpful, it is simply a lifeline. Following USDA's announcement, we began collaborating with a diverse group of stakeholders from farmers, to shippers, and farmworkers. Together we developed a framework to provide much needed additional support to the food production system.

Ensure the Integrity of the Food Supply Chain

- Provide direct financial assistance to agricultural employers for the purpose of providing personal protective equipment, sick leave, family leave, and premium pay in line with support for other frontline workers included in our nation's critical infrastructure.
- Provide funding for childcare services for essential food supply workers.
- Provide direct financial assistance for the implementation of CDC and OSHA worker safety guidance on farms and in food processing facilities.
- Ensure sufficient funding is in place to maintain plant protection, animal health, and other inspection services.
- Support our rural health centers so workers and farmers have access to proper health care and testing resources.
- Until the Farm Workforce Modernization Act (H.R. 5038) can become law, we must provide proper legal status to the essential workers of our food supply chain who are at risk of deportation.

Specialty Crops and Research

- Create a Produce Market Stabilization Program to include direct payments to specialty crop growers and purchases of specialty crops for donation.
- Increase funding for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.

- Make the necessary investments in research to ensure that we are innovating through this crisis to emerge prepared for the future.
- Provide funding for domestic marketing of fruits and vegetables.

Dairy, Livestock, and other Commodities

- Create a program to balance supply and demand, to ensure milk prices remain stable through the crisis.
- Provide the opportunity for dairy processors to apply for recourse loans to ensure they have enough working capital to maintain operations.
- Purchase surplus dairy products for donation to food banks so we prevent waste and provide for those in need.
- Prevent potential payment defaults from impacting livestock producers by creating a statutory dealer trust like outlined in the SALE Act (H.R. 6067).
- Create new support mechanisms and waive prohibitive requirements that prevent pima cotton growers from accessing vital safety net programs.

Nutrition

- Increase benefits for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, a win-win for farmers and those who are suffering through this unprecedented crisis.
- Expand the Farm to Food Bank Program to provide funding to agricultural producers to harvest, pack, and ship their products to food banks and other community partners.
- Grant waivers to the school lunch program to allow other household members to receive school lunch benefits. A waiver is already in place to allow parents to pick up school meals for their children, parents should be able to benefit from the program as well.
- Increase funding for the Healthy Fluid Milk Incentive Program.

Paycheck Protection Program Amendments

- Amend the Paycheck Protection Program to make it more flexible for agricultural operations and to serve a larger cross-section of the food supply chain.

Foreign Agriculture Programs

- Emergency funding for Agricultural Trade Promotion and Facilitation programs such as the Market Access Program.
- Make emergency purchases for international food aid distributions.

Rural Development

- The need for broadband connectivity has never been clearer. We must make the investments in rural broadband infrastructure to bridge the urban-rural divide and emerge from this crisis more connected and ready for the next generation of agriculture innovation.
- Small, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers and ranchers face significant hurdles to receive federal aid. We must increase funding for the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program to help connect the most vulnerable producers with the resources they need to make it through this crisis.

In addition to the provisions outlined in this framework, Congress should negotiate increases to the borrowing limit of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) in order for it to fulfill its mission of stabilizing commodity markets. CCC funds must be equitably distributed and the needs of the entire food supply chain addressed without arbitrary limits not based on damages.

America's farmers, ranchers, workers, and consumers are depending on Congress to act. As we craft legislation to continue to respond to this crisis, we request that the provisions in this framework be included.



JIM COSTA
Member of Congress

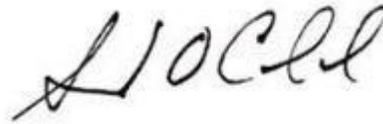
Sincerely,



JIMMY PANETTA
Member of Congress



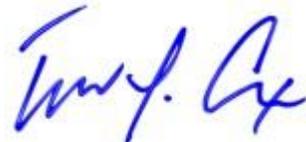
JOSH HARDER
Member of Congress



SALUD CARBAJAL
Member of Congress



MIKE THOMPSON
Member of Congress



TJ COX
Member of Congress



JOHN GARAMENDI
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Collin C. Peterson
The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro
The Honorable Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
The Honorable Kamala D. Harris