



For Immediate Release

June 10, 2021

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NFFC, RAFI-USA, Farm Aid join 100 organizations endorsing Relief for America's Small Farmers Act 2021
Act would provide a one-time USDA loan forgiveness of up to \$250,000

Washington, DC—The National Family Farm Coalition joins RAFI-USA, Farm Aid, and more than 100 food, farm, rural, and environmental advocacy allies in a [letter](#) urging Congress to support the *Relief for America's Small Farmers Act 2021*. First introduced in 2020, the bill reintroduced by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) would provide a one-time loan forgiveness of up to \$250,000 across three USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) loans: Direct Operating; Direct Farm Ownership; and Emergency. Representative Sean Maloney re-introduced the bill in the House on June 8, 2021.

The USDA reported that total [farm sector debt increased](#) by \$1.6 billion over the past year to \$441.7 billion, and the [U.S. has lost](#) more than 81,000 farms since 2013. Eligible farmers must have an average adjusted gross income (AGI) of \$300,000 or below. Given this level of income with farming's ever-rising expenses (seeds and fertilizer, livestock feed, land rental, equipment, labor), this bill offers much needed debt relief to thousands of farmers ineligible for previous farmer relief programs, such as CFAP, the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program.

Adam Young, Antwerp, New York, said, "As a young organic dairy farmer, I've had to take out FSA loans to get established and keep in operation with chronic low farmgate prices, COVID-19, and the impacts of drought. I appreciate Senator Gillibrand and colleagues addressing the high levels of farm debt which exacerbate farm foreclosures and consolidation and call on the rest of Congress to take action on this issue soon."

The challenging months of COVID-19, during which many producers lost access to markets and capital, intensified more factors outside their control. Graham Unangst-Rufenacht, Rural Vermont policy director, added, "Extreme weather, inconsistent internet, and expensive, inadequate healthcare and childcare make the situation even harder for many diverse, small-scale farms. Being relieved of huge debt would remove a lot of stress and allow small farmers to address many concerns more effectively."

Benny Bunting, lead farmer advocate at RAFI-USA, agrees. "The debt relief in this act is going to small farmers who have been left out of the benefits of most other USDA programs — farmers who have had to struggle trying to survive, who couldn't get commercial credit, and had no borrowing option but FSA."

This bill would also boost farm-related businesses and community access to local food. "The COVID pandemic clearly showed us that the increasing consolidation of our food system is dangerous," said Carolyn Mugar, Farm Aid's executive director. "We need a diversity of farmers on the land. This debt relief is an opportunity to strengthen the farmers, particularly those in local and regional food systems, who stepped up to feed their communities in the face of COVID."

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