



COVID-19 STIMULUS PACKAGE FOR THE FOOD SYSTEM

Through no fault of their own, farmers, ranchers, fishermen and all food producers are facing a crisis unlike any they have ever seen, encountering new threats to their production and markets sparked by COVID-19 while they endure a multi-year slump in prices for their goods, volatile trade disputes, frequent natural disasters, and climate disruption. What's clear is that **no farmer should lose their farm and no fisherman should lose their boat because of the crisis sparked by COVID-19. Farm, fish and food workers should likewise not lose their livelihoods.**

In stark contrast to the Administration's approach to a "trade bailout" through the Market Facilitation Program, Congress and the federal government need to act decisively to ensure that stimulus funds are allocated equitably to farmers, ranchers, and fishermen, particularly small and mid-sized operations, limited resource producers, farms operated by farmers of color, and tribal nations who have often fallen through the cracks of federal farm policy. It is likewise imperative that all farm, food and fish workers, regardless of immigration status, receive the unemployment and healthcare benefits that they need to survive this crisis while providing essential services to feed our communities. This will require a multi-faceted approach that invests in the innovative potential of food producers, ensures fair livelihoods for all who have a hand in bringing food to our tables, offers meaningful debt relief and appropriate credit to meet the demands of the moment, and ensures a more resilient food system for producers, workers and consumers alike.

We call on the President, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the Secretary of Commerce to declare a national disaster in both the agriculture and seafood sectors to unlock existing federal disaster funding and services, and enable Congress to appropriate further relief funds for the farm and seafood sector. In addition, federal agencies must use every tool available to keep people in their homes, on the land, and on the water.

Congress, meanwhile, should ensure the following in any stimulus package to address the COVID-19 crisis:

ENSURE A FAIR LIVELIHOOD FOR FARMERS, RANCHERS, FISHERMEN AND ALL FARM, FISH AND FOOD WORKERS

- Allocate an additional \$4.5 billion in funding for emergency direct payments to producers that can demonstrate revenue losses due to COVID-19, with \$1.5 billion allocated each to the farming, ranching, and seafood sectors and at least 50% of relief funds designated for small and medium-scale operations.
- Direct USDA and NOAA to prioritize financial and credit assistance to small and mid-sized operations and historically underserved producers in the farm, ranch, and fishing sectors, with prohibitions on producer funds being allocated to integrators, packers, milk handlers, processors, or other intermediaries.
- Increase funding for direct and guaranteed loans, maintaining existing loan caps, with loan limits for farm expansion of existing operations.
- Forgive all federal direct and guaranteed loan debt and suspend debt payments (both principal and interest) for two years for all producers, and ensure forgiven debt does not incur crushing tax liabilities.
- Suspend vessel loan payments (both principal and interest) to private lenders for one year.

- Authorize USDA to adapt credit, funding and program implementation requirements to keep producers on their land and in business, including equal access to:
 - Implement zero-interest for all FSA direct loans and utilize the Interest Assist program to buy-down guaranteed loan interest to zero percent.
 - Waive eligibility restrictions for new FSA loans based on past debt write-down or other agency losses.
 - Waive the prohibition on refinancing of other debt with FSA direct loans.
 - Allowing flexibility to extend operating loan terms to 10 years.
 - Require all borrower rights for FSA direct borrowers be extended to all guaranteed loan borrowers.
- Provide emergency funding for farms and businesses to offer paid sick days and unemployment benefits to all farm, fish and food workers, regardless of immigration status, with SBA program eligibility extended to farm operations and cooperatives.
- Establish a moratorium on work permit restrictions for laid off or terminated guest and migrant workers.
- Provide access to free COVID-19 testing and medical care to all farm, fish and food workers, regardless of immigration status and size of workplace, and eliminate penalties for all workers who become ill for inability to complete a contract due to the illness.
- Require all employers to provide workers with information on how to protect themselves from COVID-19 and provide protective equipment, frequent and regular hand-washing breaks, and the required space for “social distancing.” Allocate funding as needed for language-appropriate information transfer.

BOLSTER LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS AND RELATED INFRASTRUCTURE, & THE RIGHT TO FOOD

- Provide \$185 billion in additional funding, loosen barriers to application, expand allowances for online purchasing nationally, and abandon all eligibility and access restrictions (including the Public Charge Rule) to SNAP and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) programs.
- Categorize farmers' and seafood markets and local food hubs as essential services and provide emergency funding for operations and food safety training, to continue feeding local communities.
- Double funding for the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program, and allow program funds to cover direct sales from participating family-scale farms and boats to eligible consumers.
- Allocate \$200 million to the USDA Local Agriculture Marketing Program (LAMP) and invest in shoreside infrastructure including docks and cold storage facilities.
- Establish an Emergency Tribal Food Assistance Fund (FDPIR) and direct USDA to consider ways to allow dual participation in SNAP and FDPIR simultaneously.

ENACT SYSTEMIC REFORM TO BUILD RESILIENCE FOR ALL FOOD PRODUCERS, WORKERS AND EATERS

- Establish supply management programs, a parity pricing system, and strategic food reserves that ensure producers and workers receive a living wage and consumers have access to high-quality and stable agricultural goods and seafood.
- Enact an immediate moratorium on mergers and acquisitions in the seafood and food & agriculture sectors and enforce antitrust laws, particularly in the dairy, beef and seed industries.
- Reissue and finalize the USDA Farmer Fair Practice Rules to support fair agricultural contracts, producers' rights, and competitive markets.
- Increase transparency in the food system and support American farmers, ranchers, and fishermen by reinstating and expanding mandatory Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) for meat, dairy, and seafood.