



NFFC Commends Senator Gillibrand for Small/Underserved Farmer Support

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The National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC) applauds Senate Agriculture Committee member Senator Kristen Gillibrand (D-NY) for calling out the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) failure to effectively support small-scale farmers, historically underserved producers, and local food systems through the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, or CFAP. In a letter sent today to USDA Secretary Perdue, Senator Gillibrand demonstrates that, despite numerous proposals to the Secretary on their behalf, including recommendations from NFFC and allies initially [posted April 9, 2020](#), the agency has only paid lip service to the thousands of small and mid-scale food producers who have lost access to important markets such as schools and restaurants, and suffered from significant disruptions in fragile corporate-dominated value-chains during the pandemic.

In supporting NFFC's policy position that at least 50 percent of assistance funds be set aside for small and mid-scale operations, the Senator expressed "deep concern about the distribution of direct payments to farmers under the CFAP," stating that "[c]orporate agribusinesses have consistently reaped the largest share of benefits from USDA's agricultural relief efforts in recent years" and that "[f]ederal relief money, particularly in time of crisis, should prioritize American family farmers, our rural communities, and our local food systems, not foreign corporations."

"We're glad to see that Senator Gillibrand cares enough about small farmers and rural communities to highlight recommendations offered by our members this year to ensure that future CFAP payments are more equitably distributed," said NFFC president Jim Goodman of Wisconsin. "If we want a safe, secure food supply and small farms to survive in a prosperous Rural America, we need to abandon the policy of Get Big or Get Out."

Since COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic, NFFC has advocated for debt relief for FSA farm loans, expanding farmer access to credit, and funding for essential local food system infrastructure. In April 2020, NFFC worked with the Senator's office to introduce the [Relief for America's Small Farmers Act](#), which provides critical debt forgiveness for family-scale producers and has broad support across the agriculture sector with more than 60 producer and food advocate organizations demanding Congress include the bill in future COVID 19 legislative packages.

Until now there has been little transparency in the distribution of funds and overall assistance offered to large-scale and corporate farms - often growing commodity crops for export - versus small-scale and historically underserved producers growing food for their communities and their families' livelihood.

Savi Horne, Executive Director of NFFC member organization Land Loss Prevent Project, stated, "Building on this legislative effort, requests from Senator Gillibrand to USDA for information on the number of farm foreclosures, loan defaults, and the amount of debt held by small-scale and historically underserved producers under USDA's jurisdiction since March 1, 2020, will help to illustrate the disparity these farmers have faced before and during the financial stresses of COVID-19 and their ability to repay their loans while experiencing months of significant market disruptions."

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NFFC's mission is to mobilize family farmers, ranchers, and fishermen to achieve fair prices, vibrant communities, and healthy foods free of corporate domination.