

February 24, 2021

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

As the nation's largest general farm organization, the American Farm Bureau Federation greatly appreciates the collective efforts of congressional and executive branch leaders to assist U.S. farmers and ranchers greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. We especially appreciate the additional assistance the Department of Agriculture is providing directly to farmers and ranchers through the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP). To ensure the farmers impacted by the pandemic are eligible to receive this support, we urge the Department to consider extending the CFAP sign-up deadline.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 provided an additional \$13 billion to help farmers and ranchers continue to recover. The package contained up to \$1 billion for payments to contract livestock and poultry growers to cover not more than 80% of revenue losses during 2020. Eligible producers include contract growers of broilers, pullets, layers, chicken eggs, turkeys, hogs or pigs under contract in 2019 and 2020. The assistance is based on 80% of the difference in eligible revenue between Jan. 1, 2019, and Dec. 27, 2019, to Jan. 1, 2020, and Dec. 27, 2020.

In January, the Department announced details of this new assistance program as well as updated payment calculations for a variety of agricultural commodities including specialty crops and specialty livestock, nursery crops, floriculture and aquaculture among others. The deadline for these newly eligible producers, as well as those with updated eligibility, is currently Feb. 26, 2021.

The recent Regulatory Freeze Pending Review on all new and pending executive actions, though common during a change in Administration, has created confusion for farmers and ranchers with respect to eligibility and the application process for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program – Additional Assistance. Although Farm Service Agency offices continued to accept applications during the regulatory freeze, some farmers may have interpreted the implementation suspension to mean that the program was being modified or potentially terminated.

Additionally, in mid-February farmers and ranchers in many portions of the country experienced hazardous travel conditions, power outages and broadband disruptions that not only impacted their farm operations, but may have impacted their ability to complete the application process for the CFAP program. For these reasons, the American Farm Bureau Federation requests that the application deadline be extended no less than 30 days beyond the date the Regulatory Freeze Pending Review is completed. This will ensure all farmers impacted by the pandemic have

access and ample time to apply for the additional financial resources they need to continue to feed this great nation.

Thank you for all you do for agriculture,

Sincerely,



Zippy Duvall
President