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**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Agriculture**  
**Subcommittee on Biotechnology,**  
**Horticulture, and Research**  
**Room 1301, Longworth House Office Building**  
**Washington, DC 20515-6001**

(202) 225-2171

August 7, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary of Agriculture  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

We, as members of the Subcommittee on Biotechnology, Horticulture, and Research, write to express concern about the inadequacies of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) in providing critical support to the specialty crop industry. As this sector continues to suffer from the impacts of COVID-19, we ask the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to act with urgency to better support specialty crop farmers across the country.

The initial surge of COVID-19 cases earlier this spring dramatically hampered the economic success of the specialty crop sector, leading to the shuttering of food service outlets, broad supply chain disruptions, and unprecedented impacts to the farmworker community. Congress quickly acted to pass coronavirus related legislation, including the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. USDA utilized funding and authority provided in the CARES Act to announce a \$19 billion CFAP program, including \$16 billion in direct payments to domestic farmers and ranchers and a \$3 billion proposal for the Farmers to Families Food Box Program (FFFBP).

The direct payment program under CFAP has failed to provide equitable relief to the specialty crop sector. As of August 3, 2020, USDA had provided over \$6.8 billion in direct payments to domestic farmers and ranchers. Out of that total, only \$270 million has been provided to specialty crop producers, representing less than four percent of overall assistance. These funds have been particularly difficult to access for specialty crop farmers who are young, socially disadvantaged, or rely on local markets with diversified production practices. Additionally, the Farmers to Families Food Box Program has been difficult to access for limited resource specialty crop farmers who often struggle to obtain the required food safety audits.

USDA must do more to assist the specialty crop sector, particularly those farmers who are young, socially disadvantaged, or sell into local markets. The small share of Federal funds flowing to specialty crop producers highlights the critical need for USDA to conduct immediate and targeted

outreach to specialty crop stakeholders ahead of CFAP's August 28, 2020 deadline. Additionally, USDA must commit to work with small- and medium-sized producers to ensure that all aspects of the CFAP initiative are accessible, including the FFFBP.

Failure to support these specialty crop farmers will threaten the long-term viability of their businesses and negatively impact our communities. Thank you for your consideration of this request, and we stand ready to continue working with you to best support our local specialty crop farmers.

Respectfully,



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Stacey E. Plaskett  
Chair

\_\_\_\_\_/S/\_\_\_\_\_  
Antonio Delgado  
Member of Congress

\_\_\_\_\_/S/\_\_\_\_\_  
TJ Cox  
Member of Congress

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