

May 12, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Russel Vought  
Acting Director  
Office of Management and Budget  
725 17th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Secretary Perdue and Acting Director Vought:

As food, beverage, and agriculture companies, we are working to minimize disruptions to our supply chains and to ensure that food gets to where it is needed most at this moment of national crisis. Our success depends on the health, wellbeing, and economic security of our nation's farming communities. We applaud your efforts to implement the CARES Act and provide much-needed support to our nation's farmers as they manage through the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We're concerned, however, about the long-term impacts of this crisis on farming communities and its implications for our supply chain, our businesses, and our nation's food security. The Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) has the potential to provide relief to our nation's farmers, but it will jeopardize the long-term viability of our supply chains if there is no specific consideration for our nation's new and beginning farmers and USDA-designated "socially disadvantaged" farmers who are particularly vulnerable to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. The current age of the American producer is 59.4 years old, and between 2012-2017 the number of farmers over 65 increased 11% while the number of farmers under 35 increased by only 2%. The continuity of our supply chains requires that we collectively foster, support, and invest in the next generation of farmers that will feed our nation's prosperity and well-being.

We support the National Young Farmers Coalition, the leading voice of this next generation of farmers, and their recommendations to make CFAP accessible, available, and designed to support our nation's farm future. Specifically,

- *We need to be inclusive of new and beginning farmers and farmers of color:* We recommend that the USDA create set-asides for new and beginning farmers and socially-disadvantaged farmers. In addition, we encourage the USDA to track relief funds according to farm tenure, race, ethnicity, gender, and veteran status, and other demographic data so any future relief efforts may learn from this iteration and ensure fair and equitable distribution of relief funds.

- We must support new farm enterprises and innovative production models:* Our companies are critical to the food security of our nation but we do not constitute the entire food chain - our nation's current and future food security also depends on local food producers and burgeoning farm businesses led by enterprising young people. Given that many new and beginning producers operate highly diversified farms and ranches with innovative business models, and that there are many uncertainties about how the growing season will unfold, we support the recommendation of an option for producers with annual revenues of \$300,000 or less to move forward with a minimum payment of 25% of their annual revenue, with a maximum payment of \$25,000. For farmers who are able to show clear documentation of losses, we suggest coverage of 50% of losses (or 60% if a significant charitable donation of food or product was made) and a maximum payment of \$100,000. Importantly, this accounts for the fact that many beginning farmers are experiencing loss of markets from the closures of schools, restaurants, and farmers markets, as opposed to decreases in price of their products.
- We must prioritize outreach to the next generation:* The National Young Farmers Coalition has found that 30% of new and beginning farmers have not heard of the USDA programs designed to help them. We believe the USDA can efficiently implement CFAP while also prioritizing outreach to ensure young farmers are engaged, prepared, and supported to submit claims for relief funds. We urge the USDA to make specific outreach plans to ensure equitable participation from our nation's farmers of color.

Young farmers are the future of our agricultural system. Their success now has enormous implications for our success as food companies and for the communities we serve. We need a diversity of farmers and farm operations to ensure we have access to a consistent supply of high-quality food across the country. We believe that USDA should make funding from CFAP equitable and inclusive of young farmers, socially disadvantaged farmers, and local producers providing vital food during the COVID pandemic.

We encourage the USDA to consider the needs of our nation's next generation of farmers and engage with the National Young Farmers Coalition to ensure we don't risk our agricultural future.

Sincerely,

Amy's Kitchen  
 Applegate  
 Chipotle  
 Clif Bar & Company  
 Niman Ranch  
 Sweetgreen  
 Unilever



sweetgreen

