

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-2201

June 30, 2020

Mr. Stephen L. Censky  
Deputy Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave  
Washington, D.C. 20250

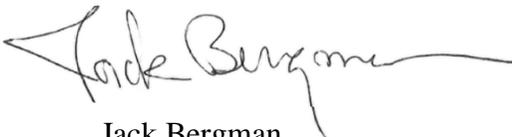
Dear Deputy Secretary Censky:

Thank you for your commitment to America's farmers, growers, and ranchers. I urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to ensure direct payments through the Coronavirus Farm Assistance Program (CFAP) have the greatest possible benefit for the producers whose operations have struggled financially due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The \$19 billion in direct payments provided through CFAP, which was established through the CARES Act, should be dispersed to a wide range of agricultural producers and not be arbitrarily limited by regulations. When USDA published the Final Rule on May 21 to outline implementation of this program, only certain products and specialty crops were originally allowed access to this vital assistance. In Michigan's First Congressional District, many operations-- including tart cherry, maple sap and syrup, and other producers -- were left out of the program. While I appreciate USDA's efforts to accept and review comments on eligibility, the Department placed the burden on smaller agricultural industries to prove why they should be eligible for relief from government-mandated shutdowns. In many cases, these regional products do not have the specific price data sought by USDA due to their size or the nature of their season.

The wellbeing of our Nation is directly connected to the success of producers of all types across the agricultural sector. As we begin our economic comeback from the coronavirus pandemic, please consider ways to facilitate direct payments -- including through the CARES Act replenishment of the Commodity Credit Corporation -- to struggling operations left out of CFAP payments. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Jack Bergman  
Member of Congress

