

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Agriculture
Washington, DC 20515

May 22, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Perdue,

We write to request additional information about contracts awarded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farmers to Families Food Box Program.

This new program was announced on April 17, 2020, and solicitations were accepted for one week. USDA then announced \$1.2 billion in contracts just one week later, on May 8, 2020, with awardees expected to begin box deliveries as soon as May 15, 2020. As Chairs of the Subcommittees in the U.S. House of Representatives with jurisdiction over USDA food purchase and donation programs, we share USDA's goal of providing effective and timely assistance to families, farmers, and food supply businesses like food distributors. We are concerned, however, that contracts were awarded to entities with little to no experience in agriculture or food distribution and with little capacity to meet the obligations of their award.

We would appreciate thorough responses to the following questions on the Farmers to Families Food Box Program:

1. What criteria were used to determine which applicants would be awarded contracts? How did USDA consider and evaluate applicants' previous experiences and preexisting relationships with farmers, non-profits, and emergency feeding organizations?
2. What consideration did USDA give to applicants' current financial standings when awarding contracts?
3. What considerations did USDA give to applicants' capacity to fully deliver the quantities outlined in their solicitations without overly relying on subcontractors?
4. What criteria were used to determine which products would be included in this program?
5. What consideration did USDA give to supporting minority-owned, women-owned, or veteran-owned businesses when awarding contracts?
6. What consideration did USDA give to awarding contracts in a way that demonstrated equity across regions and agriculture sectors?
7. How will USDA ensure awardees are fulfilling the obligations of their contracts? What action will USDA take if it is determined that an awardee is not fulfilling their obligations?
8. How did USDA evaluate an applicant's ability to implement strict food safety protocol, particularly for applicants with little to no experience in the food and agriculture sector?

9. Concerning fresh produce deliveries, did USDA require applicants have a Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act (PACA) license prior to being granted a contract? If not, why?

At a time when the farm economy continues to suffer and families across the country face increasing food insecurity, it is our shared goal that this program fulfill its stated mission to support the domestic agriculture industry and provide critical assistance to families in need. We look forward to receiving your responses and continuing our important work together on behalf of American families.

Respectfully,



Stacey E. Plaskett,
Chair,
Biotechnology, Horticulture,
and Research Subcommittee,
House Committee on
Agriculture



Jim Costa,
Chair,
Livestock and Foreign
Agriculture Subcommittee,
House Committee on
Agriculture



Marcia L. Fudge,
Chair,
Nutrition, Oversight, and
Department Operations
Subcommittee,
House Committee on
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