

March 23, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Perdue:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations representing the fresh produce supply chain, we urge USDA's to take swift action purchasing commodities currently sitting stagnant in the supply chain as a result of the Proclamation on Declaring a National Emergency Concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak.

We estimate that there is at least \$1 billion of perishable commodities without a dedicated destination as a result of the unanticipated closure of foodservice establishments, including restaurants, hotels, schools, and universities. There is no reason these high-quality, nutritious, farmer-grown products should be left in facilities to rot when there are so many American families who are suddenly faced with food insecurity. These growers and companies are already donating to food banks and others in need, and will continue to show generosity to their communities, but they are also facing their own economic crises. Simply put, without funding coming in, there may be no workforce to facilitate donations.

USDA should utilize all purchasing authority options, including but not limited to, Section 32, current existing funding through DOD Fresh, and the Food Purchase and Distribution Program for the procurement of existing foodservice inventory of fresh produce. In addition to the existing authority, USDA must consider any and all flexibility to purchase product. Delays of months will not suffice. For example, with nationwide closures of schools, thousands of USDA-funded school meal programs have cancelled orders. These products, already approved for and appropriate for children and families, could be immediately redirected to any feeding program. This is an unprecedented time and it will take unprecedented measures and innovative approaches to address the needs of businesses and communities.

We stand ready and willing to work with USDA to facilitate this request and ensure that we do right and feed everyone, together.

Sincerely,

United Fresh Produce Association  
Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association  
Western Growers  
National Potato Council  
American Mushroom Institute  
California Avocado Commission  
California Citrus Mutual  
California Farm Bureau Federation

California Fresh Fruit Association  
California Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement  
California Table Grape Commission  
Colorado Potato Administrative Committee  
Cranberry Institute  
Empire State Potato Growers  
Florida Citrus Packers  
Florida Tomato Exchange  
Florida Watermelon Association  
Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association  
Georgia Watermelon Association  
Grower-Shipper Association of Central California  
Gulf Coast Watermelon Association  
Maine Potato Board  
Michigan Apple Committee  
National Onion Association  
New York Apple Association  
North American Strawberry Growers Association  
North Carolina Blueberry Council  
North Carolina Potato Association  
North Carolina Vegetable Growers Association  
North Carolina Watermelon Association  
Northwest Horticultural Council  
Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association  
Produce Marketing Association  
Southeast Produce Council  
Texas Citrus Mutual  
Texas International Produce Association  
United Potato Growers of America  
US Apple Association  
US Sweet Potato Council  
Ventura County Agricultural Association  
Western Watermelon Association  
Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association