

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 1, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Perdue:

Thank you for your commitment to supporting American farmers and our agricultural economy throughout the COVID-19 crisis. As you are well aware, COVID-19 is severely disrupting meat production operations essential to our country's food supply, including chicken farming and processing. On April 17, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that it will provide \$16 billion in direct financial assistance to agricultural producers impacted by COVID-19. As representatives of states with substantial chicken operations, we strongly request that USDA provide direct assistance for chicken farmers impacted by COVID-19 and continue to provide support for chicken processing facilities.

The U.S. chicken industry provides an essential service in feeding Americans, who on average consume about 100 pounds of chicken meat each year. As you know, chicken processing facilities across the country have been forced to reduce or suspend production as a result of workforce shortages caused by COVID-19. We appreciate USDA's efforts to comply with President Trump's executive order and work with processing facilities, local officials, and other federal agencies to keep these facilities operating and provide employees with the safest working conditions possible. As these facilities continue to experience challenges due to COVID-19, we ask that you continue to provide support to the fullest extent possible.

The challenges faced by chicken processing facilities impact the entire supply chain, including the independent family farmers in our states who raise chickens. Chicken farmers across the country have been forced to depopulate millions of healthy birds in response to substantial reductions in processing capacity. As these farmers cope with changing and uncertain demand, we believe it is essential that they be provided with direct financial assistance.

The impacts of COVID-19 on the chicken industry are becoming more serious and visible as the disease continues to spread throughout the United States. As an industry essential to American food security, we urge you to provide necessary support for chicken farmers and processing facilities.

Thank you for your attention to this request. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like more information or have any questions.

Sincerely,

/s/ Christopher A. Coons

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

/s/ Rodger F. Wicker

Rodger F. Wicker
United States Senator

/s/ Mark R. Warner

Mark R. Warner
United States Senator

/s/ John Boozman

John Boozman
United States Senator

/s/ Thomas R. Carper

Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

/s/ Tom Cotton

Tom Cotton
United States Senator

/s/ Doug Jones

Doug Jones
United States Senator

/s/ Thom Tillis

Thom Tillis
United States Senator

/s/ Chris Van Hollen

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

/s/ Kelly Loeffler

Kelly Loeffler
United States Senator

/s/ Benjamin L. Cardin

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

/s/ Cindy Hyde-Smith

Cindy Hyde-Smith
United States Senator

/s/ Bill Cassidy, M.D.

Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator

/s/ James Lankford

James Lankford
United States Senator

/s/ James M. Inhofe

James M. Inhofe
United States Senator

/s/ Richard Burr

Richard Burr
United States Senator

/s/ John Cornyn

John Cornyn
United States Senator

/s/ Tim Scott

Tim Scott
United States Senator