

May 1, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Perdue:

I am writing in support of our commercial fishermen, shellfish growers, and aquaculture farmers and request they be included in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Purchase and Distribution (Farmers to Families Food Box) Program as a part of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) that was funded through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. I also request additional funding for CFAP, to properly allow for the inclusion of commercial fishermen, shellfish growers, and aquaculture farmers in the Farmers to Families Food Box Program. Our commercial fishermen, shellfish growers, and aquaculture farmers in New York and around the country have been hard-hit by the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has significantly disrupted their markets and the restaurant and food service industry on which they rely.

As announced, through the Farmers to Families Food Box program, USDA will partner with regional and local distributors, whose workforce has been significantly impacted by the closure of restaurants, hotels, and other food service entities to purchase \$3 billion in fresh produce, dairy, and meat. The distributors and wholesalers will then provide a pre-approved box of fresh produce, dairy, and meat products to food banks, community and faith based organizations, and other non-profits who are currently serving Americans in need during this public health crisis. Given that our commercial fishermen, shellfish growers, and aquaculture farmers are hurting, along with our livestock, crop, produce and dairy farmers and ranchers, due to the disruption of their typical markets that include restaurants, hotels, and other food service entities, it only makes sense that they be included in the USDA's Farmers to Families Food Box program as well. Commercial fisherman, shellfish growers, and aquaculture farmers all play essential roles in feeding coastal states like New York.

In order to provide our regional and local distributors, including our commercial fishermen, shellfish growers, and aquaculture farmers, the clarity needed to most effectively utilize funding for this food purchasing and distribution program, I request that the USDA provide Congress with an implementation plan that outlines the necessary changes needed to include fishermen, shellfish growers, and aquaculture farmers in the Farmers to Families Food Box program by Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup> 2020.

Our commercial fishermen, shellfish growers, and aquaculture farmers are in desperate need of the federal government's help and support now more than ever before. I hope that you will

seriously consider this request in order to ensure that our fishermen, shellfish growers, and aquaculture farmers can get the same opportunities as our livestock, crop, produce and dairy farmers and ranchers, and get access to the assistance they need to help get them through this very difficult economic time.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and I look forward to your prompt response. Should you wish to discuss this matter in further detail, please do not hesitate to reach out to my staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kirsten Gillibrand". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator

Cc: Bruce Summers, Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA