



IDFA
International
Dairy Foods Association



April 10, 2020

Dear Secretary Perdue:

On behalf of the thousands of American dairy farmers and processors who are part of the International Dairy Foods Association and the National Milk Producers Federation, and the 200 food bank members of Feeding America, we want to thank you for USDA's swift support in response to COVID-19.

The actions taken to date by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) have ensured that millions of children, families, and seniors can access needed food assistance during the pandemic. We also appreciate that USDA has responded quickly to the increased need across the country to help states enroll newly eligible people for federal nutrition programs. Adding to the vital federal response, the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has assured our nation's growers and producers that the Department stands ready to provide market support for shifts in our nation's food supply chain.

Feeding America understands how critical our nation's producers, growers, and processors are to ensuring individuals have access to nutritious food. NMPF and IDFA understand the critical role of wholesome, nutritious dairy products in helping address the dramatic increase in food insecurity across our great nation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this partnership of food banks and dairy producers and processors, and the work of USDA to provide vital dairy purchases through the Food Purchase and Distribution Program, food banks have been able to distribute large amounts of critically needed milk, cheese, and butter to communities in need.

Food banks in many areas are struggling right now to keep up with demand, with individuals in some communities waiting hours for emergency food distributions. With more than 10 million people having filed for unemployment benefits in March, we believe the urgent need for food assistance will continue to increase. Feeding America has analyzed the potential impact of the pandemic and we predict up to an additional 17.1 million people could experience food insecurity, a 46 percent increase from the 37 million who were food insecure prior to the pandemic.

We ask USDA to look at how to strengthen existing partnerships with additional investment as you identify how to provide support to U.S. producers impacted by major shifts in demand toward more home-based food consumption. We also ask you to support innovative partnerships that can quickly and efficiently move fluid milk and other dairy products into the food bank system as time is of the essence.

We are confident that, with your continued leadership and commitment to helping people in need, our collective members can weather this crisis and be ready to do the hard work of rebuilding our economy once the outbreak has eased.

Thank you for your partnership and continued support.

Sincerely,



Claire Babineaux-Fontenot
CEO
Feeding America



Michael Dykes, D.V.M.
President & CEO
International Dairy Foods Association



Jim Mulhern
President & CEO
National Milk Producers Federation