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## USDA Announces Pandemic Assistance for Producers Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced on March 24 that it is establishing the USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers program to help bring financial assistance to a broader set of producers than in previous COVID aid programs (Usda.gov/media/press-releases/2021/03/24/after-identifying-gaps-previous-aid-usda-announces-pandemic). The new program also will address the gaps and disparities in how previous COVID aid was distributed to producers.

The program consists of four parts. Part one will make at least \$6 billion available to broaden assistance to more producers. This will include assistance for:

- Specialty crops, beginning farmers, local, urban and organic farms
- Costs associated with organic certification or to continue or add conservation activities
- Personal protective equipment and other protective measures for food and farm workers, producers, processors and distributors
- Improving the resilience of the food supply chain
- Developing infrastructure to

support donation and distribution of perishable commodities

- Reducing food waste

Part two of the program will add \$500 million to existing programs. This includes:

- \$100 million for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
- \$75 million for the Farmers Opportunities Training and Outreach program
- \$100 million for the Local Agricultural Marketing Program
- \$75 million for the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program
- \$20 million for the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- \$20 million for collaborative research between Texas A&M and the Agricultural Research Service that examines the links between agriculture, food production and human health and nutrition
- \$28 million for National Institute of Food and Agriculture grants to expand or sustain existing farm stress assistance programs

Part three expedites provisions for carrying out formula payments for Coronavirus Food Assistance Program programs. This includes finalizing routine decisions and processing payments for Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program and Wildfire Indemnity Program Plus payments. Existing programs, such as the CFAP will fall under this new program where statutory authority allows and will be refined to better address the needs of producers.

Part four of the program will reopen CFAP 2 sign up for at least 60 days, beginning April 5, 2021.

Overall, the new program seeks to:

- Improve outreach to small and socially disadvantaged producers
- Get financial assistance to small and medium sized producers, and producers of less traditional crops including specialty crops and organic producers
- Make eligibility more consistent with the Farm Bill

The Commission will keep the industry updated on the latest information as it becomes available. 🍌