

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 16, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Perdue,

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to assist farmers during this unique and difficult period. Our dairy producers are facing unprecedented economic damage as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and we urge you to act expeditiously to provide them with robust support.

California is the leading dairy state in the nation, with our farmers producing nearly one-fifth of the nation's milk supply. Therefore, any harm that California producers endure on account of the economic devastation being wrought by the pandemic will significantly impact the nation in its entirety. We have heard directly from our constituent dairy farmers and echo their call for swift action.

Given the significant decline in milk prices, we urge you to provide a direct payment to producers, without regard to herd size, and to do so in a way that addresses the roughly 10% imbalance between milk supply and demand on account of the many food-service sector and related closures. Providing an incentive to reduce production should help farmers recover more quickly and prevent further and long-term declines in price.

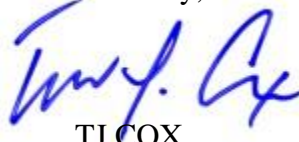
We also urge you to make substantial purchases of a variety of different dairy products, with a focus on those that cannot be repurposed for retail sale. A swift and large purchase will help to stabilize farmer prices and help food banks – where dairy products are very popular – to meet unprecedented demands for donations, providing an essential opportunity to decrease food insecurity as unemployment rises.

We thank you for your continued work and urge you to provide significant support to our dairy producers. We are fearful that without decisive action, the bottom will fall out from underneath this critical sector, jeopardizing the livelihoods of many and undermining access to a healthy, nutritious product during this time of need.



JIM COSTA
Member of Congress

Sincerely,



TJ COX
Member of Congress



JOSH HARDER
Member of Congress