

Thanks to our partner National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) for this information.

## Call Scripts and Guidance for Calling USDA FSA Offices

### Basic instructions –

- You can call the state office in Davis at 530-792-5520 or look up your county office via the FSA County Office Directory: <https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>
- Give them a call!
- Introduce yourself, your farm, what you do
- Let them know you're calling about the new *USDA Coronavirus Food Assistance Program* \$16 billion in farmer aid and that you have some questions about your eligibility
- Keep us posted about what you hear! Send news you learn from your FSA office to [alerts@sustainableagriculture.net](mailto:alerts@sustainableagriculture.net)

### Example questions to consider when you call your FSA county office -

- I hear there is aid money available for small farmers who sell at farmers markets and directly to schools and local restaurants which have been impacted by the pandemic. Do you have any information about how to apply for that?
- Do I need to have any sort of documentation of my sales or losses? How do I show the pandemic's impact on my business? [If you are a diversified grower - I grow and sell X varieties of crops and am able to capture a price premium for them. How can I ensure this is reflected in my aid?]
- Is there a way to get support if I am still able to sell my crops but my costs of production, marketing, and delivery have increased because of changing protocols? (Increasing home delivery, paying staff for added time sanitizing, additional safety equipment/PPE, etc.)
- Will I qualify for this program if most of my farm income comes later in the year?
- How will USDA handle payments to diversified farmers who don't produce just one commodity? [Share a little bit about what you grow / raise]
- How can I prove my losses and price information as a certified organic farmer?

## More background on the upcoming financial aid:

The situation: USDA is preparing to distribute \$16 billion in direct aid to farmers and ranchers who have experienced financial losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Applications for the program, called the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), will be open in early May - but the program as currently designed will leave out thousands of farmers. These are unprecedented times - now is the time to urge USDA to fix problems with the program so aid can get to all who need it.

The problem: USDA's aid program may leave folks out. It isn't set up to account for farmers who sell into local/regional markets, diversified farmers, or organic farmers, it doesn't have a thorough outreach plan or reserved funding for underserved producers), it doesn't reflect realistic timelines for farmers' losses or their increased expenses in addition to their losses, and it isn't set up to focus aid on independent, family-scale producers who need help.

What we're asking USDA to change:

- Provide payments to farmers selling into local/regional channels who have lost markets
- Conduct a thorough outreach program to reach all farmers and reserve funding for underserved producers, including farmers of color

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- Focus funding toward family farms, not corporate middlemen

Learn more:

- NSAC Action Page: <https://sustainableagriculture.net/take-action/>
- FSA County Office Directory: <https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>
- USDA Press Release (official source of program details thus far):  
<https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2020/04/17/usda-announces-coronavirus-food-assistance-program>