

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

June 25, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We appreciate USDA's commitment to consider additional commodities to be eligible for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), and write today in support of including maple syrup as an eligible specialty crop in this program. We fully support the letter of request recently sent to you by Governor Janet Mills, which outlines the necessity of this relief for the Maine maple syrup industry.

Maine is proud to be the country's third-largest producer of maple syrup, and home to more than 550 maple syrup producers whose combined output totaled 580,000 gallons with a value of \$21.6 million last year alone. This is a strong sector of our state's agricultural economy, representing more than 800 full- and part-time jobs.

Like the vast majority of agricultural producers, Mainers who depend on maple syrup sales have suffered from the restrictions that COVID-19 has imposed on consumers and the supply chain generally. The impact on this industry is even more acute than most, however, given its short season from late February to mid-April and heavy reliance on direct-to-consumer sales. Every March, sugarhouses across Maine host Maple Sunday events, an annual celebration showcasing maple syrup operations throughout Maine that serves as a catalyst for sales. Due to the pandemic, this collection of events was effectively cancelled this year, eliminating many producers' best opportunity to connect with consumers and secure sales.

The CFAP was established to provide "vital assistance to producers of agricultural commodities who have suffered a five-percent-or-greater price decline and face additional significant marketing costs as a result of lower demand, surplus production, and disruptions to shipping patterns and the orderly marketing of commodities." This criteria describes the situation facing maple syrup producers in Maine and across the United States, who should be permitted to apply for the crucial support that CFAP provides.

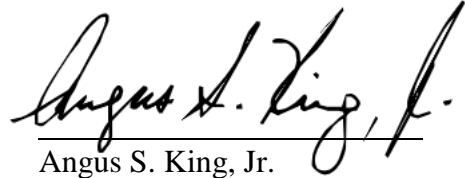
Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. We look forward to working with you to ensure that maple syrup producers gain access to the assistance that their plight warrants.

Sincerely,



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Susan M. Collins  
U.S. Senator



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Angus S. King, Jr.  
U.S. Senator



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Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress



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Jared Golden  
Member of Congress