

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 7, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We write to ask that you consider the needs of the American cut flower and greenery industry when evaluating your Department's response to the unprecedented challenges agriculture faces from the COVID-19 pandemic. We urge you to consider the various authorities USDA has at its disposal including the \$9.5 billion provided to USDA to support agricultural producers impacted by COVID-19, including floriculture which is a specialty crop.

The domestic cut flower industry creates almost \$42 million in economic impact daily and supports hundreds of growers, thousands of small businesses, and tens of thousands of jobs in the United States. In the latest National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) Commercial Floriculture survey, which covered 2018, the nation's total floriculture crop value was estimate at \$4.77 billion, up from \$4.37 billion for 2015 and \$4.20 billion for 2014.

Unfortunately, the necessary lockdowns and increased purchasing of essential household supplies due to COVID-19 have led retailers and event planners to cancel up to 100 percent of their flower orders in recent weeks and for weeks ahead. The industry estimates the economic impact of COVID-19 on domestic cut flower and cut greenery growers to be nearly \$200 million for March through May. As a result, well-established cut flower and cut greenery farms are laying off hundreds of workers and some are even going out of business. Recently, we learned that one of California's six remaining rose growers had to shut down completely. Other growers have informed us that they will have to do the same in a matter of weeks. Additionally, cut flower and greenery growers that market products directly to consumers at farmers markets and on farms through pick-your-own sales are also suffering unexpected market losses.

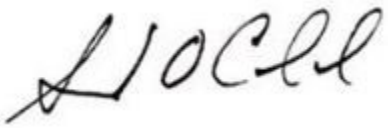
Cut flower and cut greenery growers across the country have felt the impact quickly and profoundly and are working hard to keep their businesses afloat and retain their employees, but options for relief are not currently available. Farms have been turned away from SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loans and USDA Disaster Assistance does not cover the current pandemic.

While food producers shift into overdrive to keep up with soaring demand, supermarkets and wholesalers are either significantly decreasing or are stopping the purchase of any flowers. Additionally, farmers that were fortunate to have orders to fill just learned that major trucking

companies have decided to stop shipping flowers because of statewide lockdown orders.

Today, many of our constituents are facing the prospect of closing farms that have been in operation for generations. As you work to finalize the USDA relief strategy to COVID-19 and utilize the \$9.5 billion provided by Congress, we ask that you keep the hundreds of struggling cut flower and cut greenery farms across the country in mind.

Sincerely,



Salud O. Carbajal
Co-Chair, Congressional Cut Flower Caucus
Member of Congress



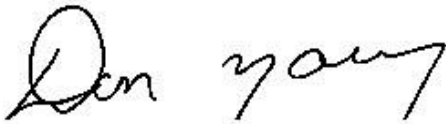
Chellie Pingree
Co-Chair, Congressional Cut Flower Caucus
Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta
Co-Chair, Congressional Cut Flower Caucus
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Co-Chair, Congressional Cut Flower Caucus
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Co-Chair, Congressional Cut Flower Caucus
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Member of Congress

Jim Costa

Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

Julia Brownley

Member of Congress

James P. McGovern

Member of Congress

Rick Larsen

Member of Congress