March 3, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer                          The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
U.S. Capitol Building, Room S-224                     U.S. Capitol Building, Room S-230  
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate                          Minority Leader, U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510                                Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi                               The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives             Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives  
U.S. Capitol Building, Room H-232                   U.S. Capitol Building, Room H-204  
Washington, D.C. 20515                                      Washington, D.C. 20515

Support Emergency Relief for Farmers and Ranchers of Color

Dear Leaders Schumer and McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Leader McCarthy:

We, the 181 undersigned organizations are committed to improving the financial and rural development interests of this nation’s Black, Indigenous, Hispanic and People of Color farmers and ranchers. We endorse and urge you to support the Emergency Relief for Farmers of Color Act introduced by Senator Reverend Raphael Warnock (D-GA), Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ), Senator Ben Ray Luján (D-NM), and Senate Agriculture Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (D-MI). We further urge you to assure the emergency relief provisions drawn from this Act as included by House Agriculture Committee Chairman, Rep. David Scott (D-GA) to the Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal Year 2021, are included in the final COVID Emergency Budget Reconciliation Package.

Our expressions of support for these family farmer provisions are rooted in fairness and equity. American agriculture has a long history of providing various forms of family farm debt and other emergency relief. Yet the troubled history of farm loan discrimination for Black, Indigenous, Hispanic, and farmers of color, coupled with their exclusion from the many farm programs other producers depend upon to survive and thrive, weakens these farm families, making it impossible to transfer farmland wealth from generation to generation.

For example, the $14.4 billion in trade adjustment assistance provided in 2019 through the Market Facilitation Program[i] did not address the needs of the small farm specialty crop and livestock sectors of the market where their production is concentrated. The emergency COVID relief provided through the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, the Farmers to Family Food Box Program, and the Small Business loan programs have provided only minimal assistance to farmers of color. Several BIPOC-led farmers groups who did participate successfully in early rounds of the Farmers to Families Food Box Program were not included in subsequent rounds.
At the same time, these producers have worked diligently throughout the pandemic to increase production in uncertain markets and to do all they can with little to no government support to meet the urgent food needs of their communities.

Over 200 years of beneficial treatment positions the sectors of farmers, who have benefited most from historic and recent investments in federal farm programs, with more assets under their control, more land base to leverage, and more market stability to capitalize on and mitigate the impacts of economic crises the likes of which we are currently experiencing. Farmers of color were already leveraged to the hilt prior to the crisis because their operations haven’t had the same multigenerational investments. The carefully crafted support from [Emergency Relief for Farmers of Color Act](https://example.com) provisions provides the urgently needed debt forgiveness and technical assistance necessary to shore up this sector of producers who do not enjoy extensive federal support and an asset base to leverage. The legislation provides:

- $4 billion in direct relief payments to help farmers of color pay off outstanding USDA farm loan debts and related taxes, and help them respond to the economic impacts of the pandemic, and

- Another $1 billion fund to root out systemic racism by expanding the capacity of USDA to provide technical and legal assistance to agricultural communities of color and to fund under-resourced programs that will shape the future for farmers and communities of color, including:
  - Grants and loans to improve land access and address heirs’ property issues;
  - Support for one or more legal centers focused on agricultural legal issues of farmers of color (including succession issues made more urgent when many families have lost members to a pandemic that has claimed over half a million lives);
  - Pilot projects focusing on land acquisition, financial planning, technical assistance, and credit;
  - A racial equity commission and related activities to address systemic racism across USDA;
  - Support for research, education, and extension at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), 1994 Tribal Colleges, and Hispanic-Serving and other institutions of higher education that historically serve communities of color;
  - Scholarships at 1890’s land grant universities and for indigenous students attending land grant institutions;
  - Support for outreach, mediation, financial training, capacity building training, cooperative development training and support, and other technical assistance in cooperation with the community-based organizations and institutions of higher education with the experience to provide it;
- Assistance to farmers, ranchers, or forest landowners of color that are former farm loan borrowers and that suffered related adverse actions, or past discrimination or bias.

Black, Indigenous, Hispanic and Farmers of Color continue to play an important social and economic role in sustaining rural communities while protecting the natural resources and producing safe and affordable farm products. We, the undersigned, urge the US Congress to ensure the urgently needed emergency relief for BIPOC farmers remains in the final COVID Emergency package.

[i] GAO Report - The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) distributed about $14.4 billion in 2019 Market Facilitation Program (MFP) payments to farming operations in all 50 states and Puerto Rico... to 643,965 farming operations. MFP payments for 2019 also varied by type of commodity. Three types of commodities were eligible for 2019 MFP payments: (1) nonspecialty crops (including grains and oilseeds, such as corn and soybeans); (2) specialty crops (including nuts and fruits, such as pecans and cranberries); and (3) dairy and hogs... Less than 10 percent went to farming operations that produced specialty crops or dairy and hogs.

Original Signatories
Rural Coalition, Washington, D.C. (For more information contact picciano@ruralco.org)
North Carolina Association of Black Lawyers Land Loss Prevention Project, Durham, NC
Alabama State Association of Cooperatives, Epes, AL
National Latino Farmers and Ranchers Trade Association, Washington, D.C.
Environmental Working Group, Washington, D.C.

National Signatories
Agricultural Missions, Inc., New York, NY
Agroecology Research-Action Collective, Oakland, CA
Alianza Nacional de Campesinas, Oxnard, CA
American Farmland Trust, Washington, DC
American Sustainable Business Council, Washington, DC
Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment, Washington, DC
Center for Biological Diversity, St. Petersburg, FL
Center for Community Self-Help, Durham, NC
Center for Science in the Public Interest, Washington, DC
Clean Water Action, Washington, DC
Community Food and Justice Coalition, Oakland, California
Cooperative Food Empowerment Directive, Santa Rosa, CA
Domestic Fair Trade Association, Olympia, WA
Earthjustice, New York, NY
Eastern Hemp Foundation, Philadelphia, PA
Experimental Farm Network, Philadelphia, PA
Fair Food Network, Ann Arbor, MI
Family Farm Action, Mexico, MO
Family Farm Defenders, Madison, WI
Farm Aid, Cambridge, MA
Farmers Market Coalition, Albany, CA
Farms to Grow, Inc., Oakland, CA
Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, Atlanta, GA
Feed the Truth, Washington DC
Feeding America, Chicago, IL
Food & Water Watch, Washington, DC
Food Animal Concerns Trust, Chicago, IL
Food Chain Workers Alliance, Los Angeles, CA
Food First, Oakland, CA
Food Law and Policy Clinic, Harvard Law School, Boston, MA
FoodCorps, Washington, DC
Friends of the Earth, Washington, DC
GMO/Toxin Free USA, Unionville, CT
GreenLatinos, Washington, D.C.
Hazon, Falls Village, CT
Health Care Without Harm, Reston, Virginia
HEAL (Health, Environment, Agriculture, Labor) Food Alliance, Oakland, CA
Heifer USA, Little Rock, AR
Hunger Free America Inc., New York, NY
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Minneapolis MN
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, Baltimore, MD
King Arthur Baking, White River Junction, VT
LEAD for Pollinators, Inc., Akron, OH
National Black Food and Justice Alliance, Atlanta, GA
National Family Farm Coalition, Washington, D.C.
National Farm to School Network, Washington, D.C.
National Organic Coalition, Arlington, MA
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Washington, D.C.
National Wildlife Federation, Washington, D.C.
National Young Farmers Coalition, Washington, D.C.
Natural Resources Defense Council, New York, NY
Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance, Gloucester, MA
Organic Advocacy, Felton, CA
Organic Farmers Association, Spirit Lake, IA
Organic Seed Alliance, Port Townsend, WA
OrganicEye, Washington, D.C.
ROCUNITED, New York, NY
Pesticide Action Network, Berkeley, CA
Public Justice, Washington, D.C.
Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA, Pittsboro, NC
Rural America Chamber of Commerce, Callicoon, NY
Rural Development Leadership Network, New York, NY
Slow Food USA, Brooklyn, NY
The Common Market, Philadelphia, PA
The Food Trust, Philadelphia, PA
The Marcus Foundation, Washington, D.C.
Union of Concerned Scientists, Washington, D.C.
Women Food and Agriculture Network, Story City, IA

Regional, State and Local Signatories
21st Century Youth Leadership Movement, Eutaw AL
Abanitu Organics, Roxboro, NC
Advance Carolina, Raleigh, NC
Advancing Collective Equity, Portland, OR
African Alliance of Rhode Island, RI
Agri-Cultura Cooperative Network, Albuquerque, NM
Alabama Rivers Alliance, Birmingham, AL
Alliance for the Great Lakes, Chicago, IL
Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley, New Market, VA
American Federation of Government Employees, Local 3354, Saint Louis, MO
Asian Pacific Islander Forward Movement, Los Angeles, California
Atrisco NM, Atrisco, NM
Atrisco Valley Farm LLC, Albuquerque, NM
Black Family Land Trust, Inc., Durham, NC
Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association, Tillery, NC
Black Farmers and Ranchers New Mexico, Jareles, NM
Boulder County Farmers Markets, Boulder, CO
Brandworkers, New York City, NY
California Association of Food Banks, Oakland, CA
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association, Pittsboro, NC
CEO Pipe Organs, Delafield, WI
Chicago Food Policy Action Council, Chicago, IL
Golden Ponds Farm, Franklin, AR
Church Women United in New York State, Rochester NY
City Love, Philadelphia, PA
Coastal Enterprises, Inc., Brunswick, ME
Colorado Farm and Food Alliance, Paonia, CO
Community Alliance with Family Farmers, Davis, California
Concerned Citizens of Tillery, Tillery, NC
Cottage House, Inc., Ariton, AL
Cultivate Charlottesville, Charlottesville, Virginia
Cumberland County Food Security Council, Portland, Maine
Dakota Rural Action, Brookings, SD
Darden's Farm / Health Services, Littleton, NC
Democracy Green, Morganton, NC
Earth Action, Inc., Pensacola, FL
Ecological Farming Association, Soquel CA
EcoVillage Farm Learning Center, Richmond, CA
Ekar Farm, Denver, CO
Equity Advocates, Harrison, NY
Fair Farms, Takoma Park, MD
Farmworker Association of Florida, Apopka, FL
Feral Heart Farm, Sunol, CA
Food & Nutrition Innovation Institute at Tufts University, Boston, MA
Food in Neighborhoods Community Coalition, Louisville, KY
Friends of Family Farmers, Walterville, Oregon
Georgia Organics, Atlanta, Georgia
GoFarm, Golden, CO
Greater KC Food Policy Coalition, Kansas City, MO
Green State Solutions, Iowa City
Healthy Gulf, New Orleans, LA
Heartwood, Tell City, IN
High Desert Food and Farm Alliance, Bend, OR
Hempstead Project Heart, WI
Hmong American Farmers Association, St. Paul, MN
Hub City Farmers Market, Spartanburg, South Carolina
Idaho Organization of Resource Councils, Boise, ID
Illinois Stewardship Alliance, Springfield, IL
Interpret Green, Philadelphia, PA
Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, Des Moines, IA
Johnson's Farm, Wichita, KS
Kamaria Creations Wellness Retreat, Albuquerque, NM
Kamayan Farm, Carnation, WA
Kansas Black Farmers, Nicodemus, KS
Kansas Rural Center, Wichita, Kansas
KC Farm School, Kansas City, MO
Knoxville Knox County Food Policy Council, Knoxville, TN
La Semilla Food Center, Anthony, NM
Land For Good, Keene, NH
Land Stewardship Action Fund, Minneapolis, MN
Land Stewardship Project, Minneapolis, MN
Latino Farmers of the Southeast, Crescent City, FL
Lyon County Food and Farm Council, Emporia, KS
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, Unity, Maine
Mandela Partners, Oakland, CA
Minnow, Oakland, CA
Missouri Rural Crisis Center, Columbia, MO
Montana Organic Association, Missoula, MT
New Entry Sustainable Farming Project, Beverly, MA
New Mexico Hemp Company, LLC, Albuquerque, NM
Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York, Syracuse, NY
Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont, Richmond, VT
Northeast Organic Farming Association-Interstate Council, Stillwater, NY
Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, Kingston, NY
Nourish Colorado, Denver, CO
Now You Know New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM
Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts, Oklahoma City, OK
Oklahoma Black Historical Research Project, Inc., Oklahoma City, OK
Oregon Food Bank, Portland, OR
Pasa Sustainable Agriculture, Harrisburg, PA
Pennsylvania Council of Churches, Harrisburg, PA
Pinnacle Prevention, Chandler, Arizona
Prairie Rivers Network, Champaign, IL
Providence Farm Collective, Buffalo, NY
Radical Family Farms, Sebastopol, CA
Rogue Permaculture, Yelm, WA
Roots of Change, Oakland, CA
Rural Advancement Fund of the National Sharecroppers Fund, Inc., Orangeburg, SC
San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition, Alamosa, CO
Sanarte Healing Culture Clinic, San Antonio, TX
Slow Food Urban San Diego, San Diego, CA
Soil Generation, Philadelphia, PA
Solar Wind Works, Wellington, NV
Soul Fire Farm, Petersburg, NY
Sustainable Food Center, Austin, TX
Texas Mexico Border Coalition Community Based Organization, San Isidro, TX
The Center for Environmental Transformation, Camden, NJ
The Marion Institute, Southcoast Food Policy Council, Marion, MA
WATCH, Inc., Charlevoix, MI, USA
Western Organization of Resource Councils, Billings, MT
Winston County Self Help Cooperative, Jackson, MS
World Farmers Inc., Lancaster, MA