

# **U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Demands answers after independent GAO report confirms Trump administration mismanaged payments to farmers for trade damages**

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin today sent a letter to President Trump and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Sonny Perdue pressing them to treat Wisconsin fairly in trade aid, and calling on them to focus aid on long-lasting economic strength, not just temporary payments.

Earlier this month, a report from the independent Government Accountability Office (GAO) revealed that the Trump administration's payments to farmers harmed by the President's trade turmoil ultimately favored the South and other states over Wisconsin farmers and crops, and funneled money to large agricultural operations over smaller farms.

Despite being hit particularly hard by President Trump's trade wars, Wisconsin received less in trade aid, on average, than other states. Also, the USDA set aside additional funding for larger farms, but only 68 farms in Wisconsin benefited, amounting to less than half of one percent of the total pot.

"Wisconsin has lost 2,278 dairy farms since you took office, and 773 farms in 2019 alone. That's nearly 25 percent of Wisconsin dairies that couldn't make it in the face of trade wars, market instability, and uncertainty about the future of their

industry,” **wrote Senator Baldwin in her letter.** “In those and other communities, hardwood mills and loggers are laying off workers and closing up shop. The contours of our rural communities and the viability of rural economies are changing rapidly, along with the landscape. And yet in the face of these severe challenges, a recent Government Accountability Office report has shown that USDA resources have gone disproportionately to large farms in other parts of the country. Our rural communities are being left behind in this economy, and for Wisconsin’s family farmers and hardwood businesses, it’s getting no better fast. I am calling on you to shift course, so that rural Wisconsinites have an economic playing field where they can compete and thrive.”

The data in the GAO report confirms previous findings that the Trump administration picked winners and losers between regions, crops, and farms in their attempt to assist farmers harmed by President Trump’s turbulent trade agenda. In November, Senate Democrats released a [comprehensive report](#) detailing concerns that the Administration has distributed trade payments unevenly across the country, benefiting regions and farms that have experienced less trade damage. The Trump administration has ignored [suggested improvements](#), and a subsequent analysis showed [continued bias](#) in the trade assistance program. [Kansas State University researchers further validated these findings](#) in an economic analysis of the distribution of trade assistance, finding that cotton payments were 33 times more than the estimated trade damage.

**Baldwin continued,** “President Trump came to Wisconsin and said our farmers are “over the hump,” but they’re not. Now the Trump administration is turning its back on Wisconsin farmers and hardwood businesses and investing aid in southern states instead. That’s unacceptable.”

The full letter to President Trump and Secretary Perdue is available [here](#). The GAO report is publicly available [here](#).

An online version of this release is available [here](#).