

U.S. Sens. Baldwin, Collins, King: Introduce bipartisan Farming Support to States Act

Posted on Wednesday, May 20, 2020

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Susan Collins (R-ME) and Angus King (I-ME) introduced bipartisan, bicameral legislation, the *Farming Support to States Act*, to provide states access to immediate, flexible funding to aid in responding to urgent and emerging issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in America's agriculture economy and food supply chain. Representatives Xochitl Torres Small (D-NM) and Dusty Johnson (R-SD) introduced bipartisan companion legislation in the House of Representatives.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused severe impacts across America's agricultural economy, and there is limited time to act in order to avert the worst shocks to America's food supply and rural communities. The bipartisan *Farming Support to States Act* would help address this challenge by increasing the reliability of food access, stabilizing food supply chains, responding to severe food supply disruptions, preventing and reducing catastrophic losses of livestock, milk, produce and other products, and stabilizing our rural economies by reducing the impact of agriculture market shocks and panicked herd and farm liquidation.

"Our farmers and food workers are serving our country by doing essential work every day to feed our country, but they are really feeling the dire economic impacts of this pandemic. As the coronavirus continues to threaten our rural and agriculture economy, I'm working across party lines to deliver federal support to states so our farmers have the tools they need to get through this economic crisis," **said Senator Baldwin**. "Our bipartisan legislation helps address agriculture and food

supply chain disruptions so our farmers can get their products to market and to consumers. We quickly direct resources to the states so they can work with food and agriculture stakeholders to stabilize the food supply chain and help prevent more severe economic losses for farmers in rural America.”

“As a native of Aroostook County, I was fortunate to have grown up amid the values of hard work, determination, innovation, and common sense that define Maine’s agricultural industry and those who work in it,” **Senator Collins continued.**

“Agriculture is an integral part of the fabric of Maine’s rural communities, from newly founded farms to operations that have been passed down from generation to generation. Our bipartisan bill will provide crucial support to farmers, who have been harmed by foodservice shutdowns. It will also help to better facilitate the purchase and distribution of their products for the purpose of addressing increased food insecurity. ”

“The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated food insecurity across our nation, and at the same time left many Maine agricultural producers – including wild blueberry growers and potato farmers – with a surplus of product,” **said Senator King.** “Our bipartisan bill will aim to stabilize the agricultural economy by providing aid directly to states, expanding their capacity to swiftly address the struggles facing both our farmers and our consumers. Maine’s hardworking farmers have powered our rural economy and fed our communities for generations, and we need to give them the tools they need to continue this duty during and after this pandemic.”

As agricultural prices plummet, farmers and processors are making tough decisions about their future. Large-scale financial losses have the potential to rapidly shrink the economic production of agriculture and the rural economy, even further than the trade wars already have. Direct assistance provided to farmers this year covers only a small portion of the losses at stake, so there is a great need to address this economic instability in order to keep our agricultural economy moving.

The most efficient way to address these emerging threats is to expand the capacity of states to work in partnership with industry to respond to rapidly shifting regional and sector-specific issues. Direct assistance to farmers will have a much more valuable impact if the most severe economy-scale losses are averted through

coordinated, targeted action and intervention.

The *Farming Support to States Act* would provide \$1 billion for food and agriculture aid to states. USDA would allocate funds to all states and territories, with substantial funding targeted to states based on their contributions to regional and national food systems. Funds designated for a state could be requested by a Governor, State Department of Agriculture, or a range of other entities, with priority going to state entities and coalitions of stakeholders jointly applying. These funds will help absorb increased costs of necessary COVID-19 response actions that public, non-profit, and private entities face. They would also help states stand up responses to triage and manage the additional logistical costs of getting food to consumers and keeping the agricultural economy moving as much as possible. These actions are essential to keep supply chains running.

The *Farming Support to States Act* is supported by the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) and the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF).

“The *Farming Support to States Act* will provide states with the funds they need to foster a more resilient food system. We thank Senators Baldwin, Collins, and King, and Representatives Torres Small and Johnson, for their collaborative work to provide much needed aid that will meet the unique needs of agriculture and rural communities in America. NASDA Members are uniquely qualified to provide long-term recovery for their agricultural communities,” **said Doug Goehring, North Dakota Commissioner of Agriculture and National Association of State Departments of Agriculture President.**

“Farmers and ranchers across America are fighting to hang on through this crisis, having already been hit hard with a down farm economy and reduced trade markets long before the pandemic reached our shores. We are proud to be growing the food that fuels this nation, but time is critical in getting food from the farm to those who need it most. Farmers, ranchers and their rural communities must be able to work quickly with state and local governments to address day-to-day needs on the ground. This bill is a welcome bipartisan effort to help our country get to the other side of this crisis,” **said American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy**

Duvall.

More information about the legislation is available [here](#).

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

###