

WFU: Praises passage of support for farmers, food systems

Posted on Friday, Mar 27, 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.](#)**

CHIPPEWA FALLS – Wisconsin Farmers Union (WFU) praised provisions in the COVID-19 legislation passed late Wednesday night by the U.S. Senate that support family farmers. “Though public health is the most immediate concern in our rural communities, many family farmers are also worried about their long-term financial stability,” said WFU President Darin Von Ruden. “We’re grateful for the speed and seriousness taken by our legislators to secure this critical funding.”

The legislation includes \$14 billion to reimburse the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), which has been used to fund the Market Facilitation Program (MFP) in recent years. It also provides an additional \$9.5 billion to support livestock, dairy and specialty crop producers and local food systems.

Von Ruden noted many farms and rural businesses have already been strained by a multi-year farm economy crisis and global trade war. “Now markets are evaporating as restaurants and schools shutter and exports stall, farm labor is in short supply with borders closing, and falling commodity prices are decimating farm income. Without this important support, many farms won’t be able to last the summer.”

WFU Government Relations Associate Bobbi Wilson noted it is critical that the CCC funds be directed to farmers who are losing income. In the case of the recent MFP payments distributed through the CCC, foreign corporations like the Brazilian-owned meatpacker JBS were among the recipients who gained the most. “We want to make sure these funds are fairly distributed and find their way to the farmers who are legitimately losing income, not just large corporations,” Wilson said.

WFU is appreciative of the quick action taken on behalf of American farmers but also stresses how the current situation has shed light on problems to our underlying

structural systems. “What this two trillion dollars doesn’t address are the issues with distribution channels, growing consolidation, and a dependence on exports that are making our food system less resilient in the face of a national emergency,” Wilson said.

WFU joins other agricultural groups from across the country in calling for the Department of Justice to investigate price fixing by meatpackers. Cattle prices have dropped drastically, despite strong beef demand at grocery stores.

“Live cattle prices have been falling while in-store beef prices are climbing,” Von Ruden noted. “This market manipulation cannot go unchecked.”

The legislation will now move to the House of Representatives before ultimately making its way to the President’s desk. “Once a final package is signed into law, we hope emphasize will be placed on providing fair and equitable relief and that this funding will be enough to keep producers afloat,” Von Ruden said. “We will continue to monitor the situation closely.”

Wisconsin Farmers Union is a member-driven organization committed to enhancing the quality of life for family farmers, rural communities and all citizens through educational opportunities, cooperative endeavors and civic engagement. Learn more at www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com.