

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 14, 2020

Administrator Richard Fordyce
Farm Service Agency
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independent Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20228

Administrator Fordyce:

I write today to urge you to increase outreach to Tribal producers who are eligible for aid from the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP). This aid is essential to keeping Native farmers and ranchers in the agricultural industry and securing our food supply during these uncertain times.

As COVID-19 continues to sweep the nation, Tribal producers are facing immensely difficult decisions about the future of their farms and ranches. Markets are being upended and supply chains are collapsing, forcing producers to consider altering their planting or culling their herds in order to limit output costs. That's why Congress passed \$9.5 billion in CFAP aid, which will help the agricultural industry weather this storm.

Montana has more than 2,000 Native producers. I am hearing directly from these producers that very few are aware of any available aid from USDA. COVID-19 is equal in its treatment of producers – whether folks work on a small plot, a major ranch, or on Tribal lands – so it is vital that Tribal producers receive equal assistance under CFAP. I ask that you significantly increase Farm Service Agency outreach to Tribes so that producers are aware of the parameters of CFAP aid, and have equal access to this assistance.

Your actions could be the difference between Tribal producers staying on their land and staying in this business, or going broke. I look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jon Tester". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jon Tester