

USDA offers new round of aid for specialty crops, cotton and more

USDA announced the availability of more than \$330 million to help agricultural producers and others in the food supply chain recover from the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. It's part of USDA's Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative, which was launched in March "to respond in a broader, fairer way to the pandemic's impact across food and agriculture," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. Announced Tuesday, this new round includes funding from the recently passed in the COVID-19 relief package and includes:

\$169.9 million for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP), which supports new market opportunities. This includes \$72.9 million available as part of the annual Farm Bill funding for the program; and an additional \$97 million available as emergency funding. Grants can help organizations assist farmworkers, farmers, food businesses and other entities affected by supply chain disruption. Applications are due June 11.

\$75 million for the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (formerly known as Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive) to incentivize the purchase of fruits and vegetables for low-income consumers.

About \$80 million in payments to domestic users of upland and extra-long staple cotton. USDA will pay \$.06 per pound based on a 3-year monthly average during 2017 through 2019, covering 10 months in 2020.

USDA also informed dairy producers and processors about ongoing plans for the Dairy Donation Program (DDP). The program will facilitate donation of dairy products to nonprofit organizations that distribute food to persons in need and prevent and minimize food waste.