

1 Title: To authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to provide food and agriculture emergency block
2 grants to States, and for other purposes.
3
4

5 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in
6 Congress assembled,

7 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

8 This Act may be cited as the [“ _____ Act of ____ ”].

9 **SEC. 2. FOOD AND AGRICULTURE EMERGENCY BLOCK**
10 **GRANTS TO STATES.**

11 (a) Definitions.—In this section:

12 (1) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Agriculture, acting
13 through the Administrator of the Agricultural Marketing Service.

14 (2) STATE.—The term “State” means—

15 (A) each of the several States of the United States;

16 (B) the District of Columbia;

17 (C) the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico;

18 (D) Guam;

19 (E) American Samoa;

20 (F) the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands;

21 (G) the Federated States of Micronesia;

22 (H) the Republic of the Marshall Islands;

23 (I) the Republic of Palau; and

24 (J) the United States Virgin Islands.

25 (b) Provision of Block Grants.—

26 (1) IN GENERAL.—

27 (A) PROVISION.—Using amounts made available to carry out this section, the
28 Secretary shall provide a block grant to each State to respond to urgent and emerging
29 issues in the agriculture economy and food supply chain relating to the Coronavirus
30 Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

31 (B) ALLOCATION BY THE SECRETARY.—The Secretary shall allocate the total amount
32 made available for block grants under this section in accordance with the following:

33 (i) 75 percent shall be allocated equally among the States.

34 (ii) 25 percent shall be allocated to States with substantial agriculture and food
35 processing sectors, to be determined based on—

1 (I) the number of farms in production in the State in the 2010 crop year;
2 and

3 (II) the number of registered processing plants in the State in calendar year
4 2010.

5 (2) ALLOCATION BY STATES.—The Governor or chief executive officer of each State shall
6 allocate a block grant received under paragraph (1) in accordance with the following:

7 (A) 50 percent shall be used for capacity funding for the department of agriculture or
8 equivalent agency of the State and cooperative extension in the State for activities to
9 respond to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and related economic, social,
10 and health impacts in accordance with subsection (c), of which not less than 30 percent
11 shall be allocated to cooperative extension.

12 (B) 50 percent shall be allocated for such activities as the governor or chief
13 executive officer of the State determines to be appropriate to respond to the
14 Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and related economic, social, and health
15 impacts in accordance with subsection (c).

16 (3) REQUIREMENTS.—

17 (A) NO STATE LEGISLATIVE APPROVAL REQUIRED.—The Governor or chief executive
18 officer of a State shall be permitted to allocate funds received under paragraph (1)
19 without the approval or review of the allocation by the legislature of the State.

20 (B) AVAILABILITY.—Amounts provided to a State under paragraph (1) shall remain
21 available until expended.

22 (C) EXPEDITED PROVISION.—

23 (i) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall carry out this section in such manner as
24 to provide block grants to States under paragraph (1) as expeditiously as
25 practicable.

26 [(ii) PROCEDURE.—The administration of this section shall be made without
27 regard to—]

28 [(I) the notice and comment provisions of section 553 of title 5, United
29 States Code;]

30 [(II) chapter 35 of title 44, United States Code (commonly known as the
31 “Paperwork Reduction Act”); and]

32 [(III) any additional requirements for the promulgation of regulations,
33 including Executive Order 12866 (5 U.S.C. 601 note; relating to regulatory
34 planning and review). [SLC note: This optional language could help speed
35 up the process, but I would advise consulting with CRS or USDA to assess
36 the implications.]]

37 (c) Use of Funds.—A State shall use a block grant received under subsection (b)(1) for
38 emergency response capacity and activities to respond to specific needs relating to the
39 Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in the following categories:

40 (1) RETAIL FOOD AVAILABILITY, FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN STABILITY, AND PRESERVING FOOD

1 SAFETY.—

2 (A) Forecasting and managing food and farm supply chain disruptions to ensure a
3 stable food supply.

4 (B) Minimizing food retail disruptions for consumers.

5 (C) Ensuring continuity in food safety protections.

6 (D) Responding to labor issues from the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) to
7 minimize supply chain disruption and maximize proactive prevention and response
8 activities relating to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

9 (2) HEALTH AND RESPONSE NEEDS RELATED TO THE STABILITY OF THE FOOD SYSTEM AND
10 RURAL ECONOMIES.—

11 (A) Incentivizing and facilitating the use of prevention, response, testing, and
12 treatment by farm workers relating to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

13 (B) Supporting the essential work of veterinarians and other food safety, animal
14 health, first responders, and other rural professionals with occupational disease
15 exposure risks.

16 (C) Supporting farmers and workers who face elevated risks of contracting the
17 Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) due to their essential work to keep the food
18 system operational and reliable.

19 (D) Reducing the risk of zoonotic transfer of the Coronavirus Disease 2019
20 (COVID-19) to livestock and wildlife and related disease risks, including disease risks
21 relating to culling and carcass disposal.

22 (3) STABILIZING FARMS AND THE AGRICULTURE ECONOMY.—

23 (A) Stabilizing farm financials—

24 (i) to prevent the rapid liquidation of livestock herds and closure of farms; and

25 (ii) to address changes to planting decisions for the current season that reflect
26 current market distortions rather than longer-term predicted demand.

27 (B) Providing tools to address the behavioral and mental health of individuals who
28 are engaged in farming, ranching, and other occupations relating to agriculture (within
29 the meaning of section 7522(e)(1) of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008
30 (7 U.S.C. 5936(e)(1))).

31 (C) Facilitating and incentivizing participation in personalized and workshop-based
32 farm business plan counseling that promotes farm and agribusiness decisions that
33 increase the economic resiliency, near-term financial stability, and ongoing operation
34 of farms and rural businesses.

35 (D) Facilitating and incentivizing participation in personalized and workshop-based
36 farm transition plan counseling that promotes—

37 (i) ongoing agricultural uses of the farmland in transition; and

38 (ii) the long-term utilization and improvement of farm assets, including
39 working forests, orchards, perennial and multiyear crops, established conservation

1 practices, and watershed restoration.

2 (E) Assisting with the costs of activities that increase the economic diversification,
3 resiliency, ecosystem services, and watershed restoration for farms on which the
4 primary labor is provided by the farm owner, renter, or an individual who is working to
5 transition into the role as primary laborer, manager, and owner of the farm, such as
6 through an apprenticeship.

7 (F) Providing retirement security options for farmers who commit to helping a new
8 operator transition onto their farm, specifically for farms on which—

9 (i) the primary labor is provided by the farm owner, renter, or an individual
10 who is working to transition into the role as primary laborer, manager, and owner
11 of the farm, such as through an apprenticeship; and

12 (ii) the farmland ownership transition is economically feasible for a beginning
13 farmer.

14 (G) Addressing urgent or essential needs of rural communities that support the long-
15 term resiliency of the local economy and local quality of life.

16 (4) STATE COLLABORATION.—Collaborating and coordinating with other States—

17 (A) to address risks relating to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) to public
18 health, the health of workers in the food supply chain, and the health of livestock;

19 (B) to address regional and national supply chain issues;

20 (C) to minimize food supply chain disruptions to consumers via retailers, food
21 banks, and other distribution methods;

22 (D) to stabilize agricultural markets;

23 (E) to improve market transparency; and

24 (F) for any of the purposes described in paragraphs (1) through (3).

25 (d) Funding.—There is appropriated to the Secretary, out of funds of the Treasury not
26 otherwise appropriated, \$1,000,000,000 to carry out this section, to remain available until
27 expended.