

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

October 30, 2018

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We write today on behalf of the 21 food banks in the Feeding Texas network, who will be key partners in distributing the commodities purchased by USDA through the Trade Mitigation Food Purchase Program. Feeding Texas estimates that it could receive up to 8 million pounds of commodities from this program and does not have the capacity to distribute these donations to local providers. While we welcome the additional donations to Feeding Texas food banks, we are concerned that USDA has not provided any supplemental assistance for the storage and distribution of food purchases and request your assistance to address this issue.

Texas food banks are vital partners in our nation's response to hunger. They bring considerable expertise and significant private resources to the table to nourish the most vulnerable members of our society, including seniors, veterans, and children. The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is the cornerstone of their food supply, providing almost 20% of the food distributed by all hunger-relief agencies last year, and as much as 40% of food distributed in rural communities.

Based on the cost to distribute existing TEFAP food supplies to local agencies, Feeding Texas estimates that, on average, Texas food banks would require an additional \$.18 per pound to distribute the trade mitigation food and overcome the capacity constraints they face in rural areas. These funds would be spent in the community immediately, allowing food banks to hire additional drivers, pay for gas and trucking, rent cold storage, and hire staff to assist in food distributions where volunteers are not able to help.

Texas food banks are exploring innovative solutions to mitigate these challenges and reduce their costs, including using more innovative delivery and distribution options such as just-in-time deliveries or mobile pantry distributions in the community and working with the industry to offer additional shelf-stable options of foods. However, they lack the capacity to immediately distribute USDA's donations. To ensure that Texas food banks and others across the nation can continue to accept and distribute all of the trade mitigation food purchases, we urge USDA to use all avenues of assistance to assist these food banks as they store and distribute food to those most in need.

Sincerely,



JOHN CORNYN
United States Senator



TED CRUZ
United States Senator



WILL HURD
Member of Congress