



June 2, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Perdue:

On behalf of the foodservice distribution industry, thank you for your leadership as our nation struggles with the COVID-19 virus. USDA has worked to ensure the American food supply remains strong and safe and foodservice distributors are dedicated to helping with that mission. The International Foodservice Distributors Association (IFDA) was pleased to provide assistance as the Farmers to Families Food Box program was being put together. Now that the program is being implemented, we have seen the concerns regarding the capabilities of many of the awardees. IFDA and our member companies would welcome the opportunity to work with the agency if additional assistance is required to ensure the program is able to perform its critical function.

Foodservice distributors supply food and related products to restaurants, colleges and universities, hospitals and care facilities, hotels and resorts, and other foodservice operations. Overall, foodservice distribution is a \$303 billion industry, operating 15,000 distribution centers and employing 350,000 Americans in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. With 153,000 vehicles, IFDA members operate some of the largest private fleets in the country and employ 131,000 drivers.

Sourcing, purchasing, storing and transporting food products are core functions that foodservice distributors perform every day. While the Covid-19 crisis has created unique challenges, foodservice distributors have relied on their years of experience to ensure that those customers that are still operating, such as hospitals and long-term care facilities, have access to the products they need. While the Farmers to Families food box program called for a broad array of cold chain capabilities, many IFDA member companies submitted bids that would leverage their expertise in sourcing and last mile distribution. While some did receive awards, overall we were disappointed with the number of foodservice distributor bids that were accepted.

The success of the Farmers to Families program is critical to ensuring that food reaches those Americans who desperately need it. IFDA and our members stand ready to help should USDA determine that additional assistance is required to ensure the program is able to meet the soaring demands of the Covid-19 crisis.

USDA has long been a true advocate for the food industry and has provided the considerable regulatory flexibility that this crisis has demanded. Please do not hesitate to contact me at [mallen@ifdaonline.org](mailto:mallen@ifdaonline.org) or at 703-962-9933 if there is any way that IFDA can help USDA fulfill its critical mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark S. Allen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Mark S. Allen  
President and CEO