

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 10, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

Justifiably so farmers and ranchers across the U.S. have been declared essential during the Covid-19 pandemic. These producers who grow, pick and process food, fuel and fiber for Americans across the country have stepped up to make sure these products are still available to consumers every day and can still support the local rural economies that depend on their viability. Many Extra-Long Staple (ELS) or Pima cotton producers have faced a disproportionate amount of loss compared to upland cotton producers because of the lack of support and exclusion from the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP). ELS producers are continuing to lose money as the demand for ELS cotton has largely disappeared, resulting in larger carryover stocks, and ELS loan interest costs have increased.

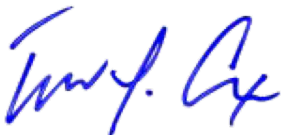
As Members of Congress who represent areas where ELS (Pima) cotton is grown, we are in constant contact with these producers from our districts hearing their frustrations and pleas for help firsthand. We urge the USDA to consider the latest data for ELS cotton and expand CFAP's eligibility to include ELS producers. Due to there being a decline in ELS market prices between January 2020 and April 2020 by 7.2%, ELS meets the threshold requirements established in CFAP for eligibility.

Additionally, export sales have been stalled since March and many shipments significantly dropped in April. Multiple international ports closed as a part of the global response to mitigate the impact of the Coronavirus. Because of the port closures and delay in deliveries there has been a rise in additional costs that were not foreseen. The impact of the Coronavirus has impacted the entire supply chain from the consumer and the retailer to farmers.

The ELS cotton grower community is a group of approximately 500 family-owned farms in Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas. Given the current economic situation, ELS producers are in dire need of the timely assistance that can be provided through CFAP. Based on the price information released since the original CFAP announcement, we strongly urge USDA to include extra-long staple cotton in the program.

Thank you for your consideration in a time of crisis.

Sincerely,



TJ Cox
Member of Congress



Jim Costa
Member of Congress



Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress



Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress



Josh Harder
Member of Congress