

JONI K. ERNST
IOWA

VICE CHAIRMAN,
SENATE REPUBLICAN CONFERENCE

WASHINGTON, DC OFFICE
730 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
PHONE: 202-224-3254
FAX: 202-224-9369

WWW.ERNST.SENATE.GOV

COMMITTEES
ARMED SERVICES
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION
AND FORESTRY
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United States Senate

May 5, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

Thank you for your commitment to helping American agriculture through this terribly difficult time. I write to bring your attention to the severe impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the egg producers in my state and to urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to assist egg farmers during this time of need.

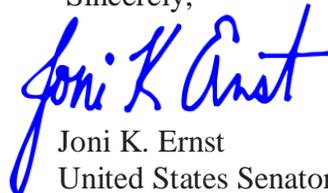
Our farmers and ranchers are doing their part to help the nation navigate the effort to contain the COVID-19 outbreak. Iowa's egg industry is no different. Iowa is home to over 55 million egg laying hens. Most of Iowa's egg production goes toward supporting our nation's commercial food service. With restaurants and other commercial facilities closed down or limiting operations, our egg industry has seen a drastic drop in demand and as a result some have had to dump product.

Producers are doing whatever they can to stay afloat. They have put large portions of their flock into molt to slow production and some are being forced to make the difficult decisions to cull their flocks. With much of Iowa's egg production going towards producing liquid egg, they cannot just easily retool their operations for consumer sales. Our egg producers need help.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act passed by Congress and signed into law on March 27th includes several provisions for assistance to agriculture. Egg producers need to be included in the recently announced Coronavirus Farm Assistance Program. Receiving direct support will help these farmers survive this impossible time. USDA should also consider making purchases of liquid egg product to distribute to families in need. This would not only help farmers by using up their excess product, it would also help provide nutritious foods to everyone in need of assistance.

Congress provided you with funds in the CARES Act to help farmers impacted by COVID-19. I urge you to use any and all tools to help mitigate the current market upheaval and allow our egg farmers to make it through this crisis.

Sincerely,



Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator

DES MOINES OFFICE
733 FEDERAL BUILDING
210 WALNUT STREET
DES MOINES, IA 50309
PHONE: 515-284-4574
FAX: 515-284-4937

CEDAR RAPIDS OFFICE
111 SEVENTH AVENUE SE
SUITE 480
CEDAR RAPIDS, IA 52401
PHONE: 319-365-4504
FAX: 319-365-4683

DAVENPORT OFFICE
201 WEST SECOND STREET
SUITE 806
DAVENPORT, IA 52801
PHONE: 563-322-0677
FAX: 563-322-0854

SIoux CITY OFFICE
194 FEDERAL BUILDING
320 SIXTH STREET
SIoux CITY, IA 51101
PHONE: 712-252-1550
FAX: 712-252-1638

COUNCIL BLUFFS OFFICE
221 FEDERAL BUILDING
8 SOUTH SIXTH STREET
COUNCIL BLUFFS, IA 51501
PHONE: 712-352-1167
FAX: 712-352-0087