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Wolf Administration to Distribute \$80 Million in USDA Foods, Receives Extension of COVID-19 Disaster Food Distribution Extension

Harrisburg, PA – Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding today announced that the Department of Agriculture has received approval to continue operating the Disaster Household Distribution program, through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), to provide food to Pennsylvanians adversely affected by COVID-19 mitigation efforts. Originally approved by the USDA on March 27, the Disaster Household Distribution program, set to expire the end of May, has been approved through June 25.

“While we’re working to safely reopen Pennsylvania, many are still out of work and in need of the food security this program offers,” said Secretary Redding. “This extension lifts a weight off the shoulders of families across the commonwealth, giving assurance that food is always accessible.”

The waiver eliminates the need for individuals to verify financial eligibility upon arrival at a food bank or pantry. Those in need of food through June 25 simply need to show up and receive their food. In addition to removing barriers for Pennsylvanians to access food, the waiver allows the Department of Agriculture and its partners to distribute USDA Foods – including meats, vegetables, fruits, canned goods, cereal, rice, pasta, eggs, milk, and more – to those in need.

The department estimates that in 2020, the Bureau of Food Assistance will move more than \$80 million of USDA foods through Pennsylvania’s charitable food system in all 67 counties, with the state’s allocation of TEFAP funding from USDA. In 2019, nearly \$50 million was allocated to the purchase of USDA Foods. The additional allocation for 2020 comes through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act and the CARES Act, in addition to an increase in funding through continued trade mitigation efforts by USDA.

“We know that reopening Pennsylvania will take time, and as families start to rebuild their lives and hopefully return to work, we also know that many will continue to need the support of the charitable food network to get them through this transition,” said Jane Clements-Smith, executive director of Feeding Pennsylvania. “We are grateful for the USDA’s commitment to helping us deliver food efficiently and supporting our efforts through innovative programs that not only support families with nutritious food, but also support our farmers and processors.”

In addition to accessing these USDA Foods and foods procured by the food bank, Pennsylvanians are now able to access fresh, local foods through the Farmers to

Families Food Box program. Food banks around the state have begun to hold events to distribute fresh products from USDA-approved distributors, including [17 Pennsylvania-based contractors](#) providing milk and other dairy products, pork, chicken, and fresh produce. Pennsylvanians interested in receiving a box through the Farmers to Families Food Box program should contact their [local food bank](#) for distribution information.

“Food does more than feed our bodies, it lifts our spirits when everything around us is changing and unfamiliar,” added Redding. “Its my hope that no one hesitates to take advantage of the programs and food available. Today’s troubles are temporary, these times will pass. Pick up a box of food from a local farmer, enjoy the taste of home, and don’t worry. Pennsylvania’s farmers and charitable food system are up to the task of keeping Pennsylvania nourished.”

For more information about Food Security in Pennsylvania, visit agriculture.pa.gov/foodsecurity. For information as it relates to agriculture during COVID-19 mitigation in Pennsylvania visit agriculture.pa.gov/COVID. For the most accurate, timely information related to Health in Pennsylvania, visit on.pa.gov/coronavirus.