

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 27, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

On behalf of the National Peach Council, we write to request your consideration of the direct purchase of 65 million pounds of fresh peaches for distribution through USDA's COVID-19 Food Assistance Program. This purchase would mitigate the impact of recent changes in consumer purchasing due to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

The United States peach industry seeks to assist those grappling with the economic effects of the pandemic by supplying fresh peaches. This season's growing conditions were incredibly favorable, leading to one of the largest and finest crops in recent years. However, the disruption of global trade negotiations coupled with altered consumer behavior put this industry at great risk. Peach growers directly support local rural economies, with 40% of production costs being labor. Consequently, a domestic market collapse would be detrimental to these communities.

It is also important to emphasize the timing of this aid, as peaches are highly perishable. U.S. peach production begins in May, hits its peak in July, and generally ends by mid-September. Accordingly, it is recommended that 25% of the purchases be made in June, 50% in July and the final 25% in August.

As Representatives of the "Peach State," we urge you to support this vital industry by strongly considering the purchase of 65 million pounds of fresh peaches. We sincerely appreciate your support of our farmers and look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

David Scott
Member of Congress

Sanford Bishop
Member of Congress

Austin Scott
Member of Congress

Rick Allen
Member of Congress

John Lewis
Member of Congress

Doug Collins
Member of Congress

Lucy McBath
Member of Congress

A. Drew Ferguson, IV
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

Jody Hice
Member of Congress