

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 30, 2021

Zach Ducheneaux
Administrator, Farm Service Agency
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250-0506

Dear Administrator Ducheneaux:

We are writing to request that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) provide critical assistance to farmers who grow Kentucky bluegrass seed for the turf and sod industry through the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP). We appreciate the reopening of the CFAP- 2 and USDA's commitment to reevaluate commodities that had been previously overlooked.

On January 15, 2021 USDA announced eligibility for turf and sod producers. Kentucky bluegrass seed growers inquired about CFAP- 2 and were told "Turf for Sod can only be used for Sod and is CFAP-2 ELIGIBLE, Turf Grass Seed could be used for Forage crops as well as for Sod therefore INELIGIBLE for CFAP- 2 benefits." The USDA - Farm Service Agency (FSA) has determined that "seed commodities are eligible if the underlying commodity is eligible at the underlying commodity payment category and rate." FSA has also determined that "crops intended for grazing are not eligible for benefits". The grass grown from the Kentucky bluegrass seed our farmers produce was never contracted for or intended to be grazed or used for forage. Therefore, we believe that FSA has made an honest error in finding bluegrass seed for turf and sod ineligible.

USDA reopened CFAP-2 in April 2021, to remain open for at least 60 days, and with an end date to be determined. Kentucky bluegrass seed producers from across Oregon, Idaho, and Washington requested our help in correcting the eligibility decision for Kentucky bluegrass seed produced for sod and turf. Since the sign-up period might now end at any time, time is of the essence to reevaluate eligibility.

Most of our nation's Kentucky bluegrass seed is grown in the Pacific Northwest. The varieties produced in our region (which must be of the highest quality to make grade) are bred, contracted, produced, and marketed for the turf and sod industries, not for forage use. Seed breeders carefully select for traits that are less forage-related to produce grasses ideal for lawns that are mowed at a one-to-two-inch height and that require minimal water and pesticides to remain healthy.

Businesses large and small buy Kentucky bluegrass seed produced in the Pacific Northwest. They purchase the seed, blend it, package it, and ship it nationwide to retailers including Home Depot, Lowes and Walmart. These retailers sell the seed to homeowners, professional landscapers, golf courses, and soccer fields. The seed is also exported to markets around the world to be used for turf.

Our Kentucky bluegrass seed farmers are proud to supply the highest quality product for families, businesses, and communities. We appreciate USDA's decision to reopen CFAP- 2 and reevaluate commodities that were previously overlooked. We request that USDA consider the contents of this letter and expand CFAP- 2 eligibility to include Kentucky bluegrass seed for the turf and sod industry. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Cliff Bentz
Member of Congress



James E. Risch
U.S. Senator



Mike Crapo
U.S. Senator



Mike Simpson
Member of Congress



Russ Fulcher
Member of Congress



Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
U.S. Senator