

AID

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Direct payments

Although USDA has not confirmed final numbers for direct payments to farms and ranches, Nepveux said a leaked copy of an embargoed release gives approximations, including:

- \$9.6 billion for the livestock industry, including \$5.1 billion for cattle, \$2.9 billion for dairy and \$1.6 billion for hogs.
- \$3.9 billion for row crops.
- \$2.1 billion for specialty crops.
- \$500 million for other sectors, including poultry, sheep, hemp and niche sectors.

None of the money will be used for biofuels or ethanol, Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue said at a press briefing Friday. He said the Farm Bureau is advising USDA so producers suffering losses, including small farms, won't be overlooked.

"We don't want to leave anyone behind," he said.

Direct aid

To qualify for direct aid, a commodity must have declined in price by at least 5% between Jan. 1 and April 15. According to industry experts, most agricultural products qualify. For example, since the start of 2020, live cattle prices have plummeted 25% and hog prices 53%.

USDA has yet to confirm what "price series" — or system used to compare the standard price of a good — it will use. For specialty livestock and crops, calculating price series and losses is complicated and may take longer, experts say. A USDA spokesperson said the agency will specify in its upcoming rulemaking what specialty category producers need to do to demonstrate losses.

The payment limit is \$125,000 per commodity with an overall limit of \$250,000 per individual or entity.

When and how

Perdue said USDA will most likely use existing infrastructure, such as its

Farm Service Agency, to distribute checks.

"I'm hoping we can get checks by the end of May," said Perdue.

But it is still unclear whether checks will go out or sign-ups will begin by that time. A USDA spokesperson told the Capital Press on Monday that "sign-up for the direct support is expected to begin by the end of May (and) more information will be provided when the rule is published."

\$3 billion for food

USDA, in partnership with local and regional distributors, will purchase \$3 billion in food.

Each month, USDA will purchase an estimated \$100 million each of fresh produce, dairy and meat. The distributors and wholesalers will then provide the farm products in boxes to food banks, community and faith-based organizations and other nonprofits.

Purchases of produce, dairy and meat products will begin in approximately two weeks, a USDA spokesperson told the Capital Press.

USDA has not yet specified how or when producers will be able to apply for aid or what information they will be required to submit — but it will include paperwork, and experts say farmers should be ready.

"I don't want to be too facetious, but does anything happen in the federal government without paperwork?" said Perdue in the conference call.

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