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For more information contact: Communications Director Danielle Endvick, 715.471.0398
dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com

Farmers Union: U.S. trade strategy should focus on long-term security, not short-term emergency aid

CHIPPEWA FALLS – U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue announced Aug. 27 the details of the administration’s emergency aid package for farmers affected by the escalating trade war with China and other top trading partners.

The package includes incremental payments to producers of soybeans, sorghum, wheat, corn, pork, dairy and cotton through the [Market Facilitation Program](#), administered by the Farm Service Agency, beginning Sept. 4. The payments will be based on 2018 production and subject to payment limitations. The agency also announced plans to purchase up to \$1.2 billion in commodities impacted by tariff retaliation, including fruit, nuts, rice, legumes, beef, pork and milk through a Food Purchase and Distribution Program. Additionally, it authorized a \$200 million Trade Promotion Program to develop foreign markets for U.S. agricultural products.

“While this aid is appreciated, I fear I speak for the bulk of our nation’s farmers when I say it may be too little, too late,” said Wisconsin Farmers Union President Darin Von Ruden. “America’s family farmers want – need – a fix to the systemic international trade issues that have plagued our markets with instability.”

Von Ruden added that the proposed 12 cents per hundredweight payout for dairy would likely only begin to scratch the surface of the market impact felt by dairy farmers. For existing dairy operations, payments will be on 50 percent of production, with production history established using the highest annual milk production marketed during the full calendar years of 2011, 2012, and 2013.

“This trade war has already caused irreparable, long-term harm to what were strong trade relationships for American family farmers and ranchers,” added Rob Larew, NFU Senior Vice President of Public Policy and Communications. “Farmers Union wants to see the administration pursue fair trade agreements to the benefit of farmers and rural communities. But it must transition away from an ad hoc emergency aid strategy and work with Congress to develop a legislative solution to low farm prices that keeps family farmers in business.”

“The USDA aid package is a band-aid on the gaping wound of unstable markets,” Von Ruden said, calling instead for efforts to work toward building an agricultural economy that is embedded in local and regional communities rather than one so reliant on exports. “Ultimately our family farmers need strong markets and long-term certainty.”

Wisconsin Farmers Union is a grassroots organization committed to enhancing the quality of life for family farmers, rural communities and all citizens through education, cooperation and legislation. Learn more at www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com.

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