

The Agriculture Department on Tuesday rolled out the final details of its \$16 billion direct payment package for farmers and ranchers, one month after first announcing the aid program.

**Impact:** The [announcement fills in the blanks after a flood of questions](#) from lawmakers and industry groups about the long-awaited payments, like precisely which producers are eligible and how USDA will determine the size of checks to each farmer. The payments are the centerpiece of Washington's efforts so far to save the farm economy from severe supply chain disruptions amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"These payments will help keep farmers afloat while market demand returns as our nation reopens and recovers," Secretary Sonny Perdue said in a statement.

**Background:** USDA outlined the aid package in mid-April, along with a separate \$3 billion to purchase dairy, meat and produce from farmers and ship it to food banks and other nonprofits. But after [bipartisan pushback](#) against proposed limits on the payments, Perdue agreed to loosen certain restrictions, like the initial cap of \$125,000 per commodity.

**What happened:** Perdue, President Donald Trump and his daughter Ivanka Trump touted the program at a White House event with farmers on Tuesday, where the president said, "There's no president that's treated the farmers like Trump."

At the same time, [USDA published new details of the program](#), including a list of livestock and crops that qualify for aid: cattle, lambs, hogs, yearlings, barley, canola, corn, upland cotton, millet, oats, soybeans, sorghum, sunflowers, durum wheat and hard red spring wheat. The department also spelled out how payments will be calculated.

USDA maintained the original payment limit of \$250,000 per person, but the per-commodity cap was eliminated. Producers will have to certify that their adjusted gross income is less than \$900,000 or that at least 75 percent of their income is derived from farming, ranching or forestry.

Because of high demand for aid and a limited pot of money, the department will first send producers 80 percent of their total payment, with the rest coming later if the funds haven't been depleted.

**What's next:** Farmers and ranchers can apply for aid [starting on May 26](#), and USDA will begin sending out checks as soon as a week later. The application window will remain open through August, but Perdue has said he expects most producers won't wait that long to put in their paperwork.

Kevin Ross, president of the National Corn Growers Association, [called the announcement](#) "a first step to getting farmers, and our customers, back on solid footing."