

2021 Rocky Mountain Farmers Union Proposed Special Order of Business

Pandemic Relief for Farmers and Food Assistance

Whereas: as essential businesses, farmers have increased costs to keep themselves and their customers safe during the covid-19 pandemic. They must provide personal protective equipment to workers and use additional packaging when distributing their products to consumers, which all contribute to the overall cost of their operation.

Whereas: many farmers have experienced a significant loss of revenue due to COVID-19 disruptions.

Whereas: the pandemic has compounded the inequalities among lower-income and communities of color who already struggle to access fresh nutritious food. Food insecurity rates have tripled since the onset of the pandemic due to increased unemployment and economic hardship.

Whereas: the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) gives families choice over their own food, is proven to lift people out of poverty, and helps local economies with economic stimulus of at least \$1.50 for every \$1 of the benefit spent.

Whereas: procurement of food from local producers for food pantries and food assistance programs supports both food-insecure communities and supports the local agriculture economy.

Therefore, be it Resolved: Congress should provide flexible COVID-19 relief to ensure states can continue to provide the resources all families need through the financial crisis. With such funding the state should prioritize support for our local emergency food providers, nutrition programs, and local farmers, including continuation of the Payroll Protection Program to support farms to employ workers.

Therefore, be it Further Resolved: Congress should increase maximum SNAP benefits for all individuals and families and increase SNAP minimum benefits to at least \$30/month indefinitely. Furthermore, Congress, the federal administration, states, and counties should remove all administrative barriers that inhibit eligible people from receiving these vital benefits.

Therefore, be it Further Resolved: Congress should put in place universal school meal programs for all children and Summer EBT to ensure all children can grow, learn, and thrive.

Therefore, be it Further Resolved: Congress should consider a national Food Pantry Assistance Program. The success of this program in Colorado must be leveraged to call on Congress to pass a national program that will strengthen local economies, help food producers, and protect every person's right to access fresh, local, and nutritious food from their communities.

Therefore, be it Further Resolved: Congress should support increased financial needs of food producers during the pandemic by maximizing the immediate reach of food assistance programs to increase benefits and access to fresh, healthy foods by directing emergency funding to the GusNIP (SNAP incentive) program so that states can increase their healthy food incentives and by targeting direct financial assistance to historically underserved producers whose businesses are most at risk during the pandemic.