



# COVID-19 RELIEF TOP PRIORITIES

*Intertribal Ag Council's Native Farm Bill Coalition Top Priorities for Additional COVID-19 Relief for Tribal Agriculture*

January 29, 2021

## **Defer Ag Loan Payments to Help Producers Through COVID-19 Impacts**

- ***Implement Farm Service Agency (FSA) borrowers' assistance relief policies to support Tribal producers and entities through the continuing COVID-19 food system impacts***

While relief provided through congressional funding and USDA have provided payments for losses to agriculture producers, still many more are facing increased uncertainty and risks associated with their operating loans as the pandemic continues to impact production and markets. Farm Service Agency (FSA) borrowers need immediate payment relief to ensure continuity of operations and access to credit, and the proposed provisions will also enable assistance to non-FSA borrowers as well. Providing relief will help stabilize production in Indian Country and all of rural America, and further improve the sustainability and resiliency of Indian Country agriculture. Congress must take swift administrative action to:

- Immediately defer of all USDA loan principal due for the 2021 and 2022 production years, and extend all loans 2 years;
- Offer interest buy-down of 2 percent to lenders who offer principal those same deferrals and extensions to their borrowers; and
- Use FSA Farm Ownership loans to refinance real estate and other debt to aid in recovery from this crisis. This program has no taxpayer cost.

These actions will support producers across the country by keeping their production income invested in their local economy, infusing over \$1 billion in deferred principal payments directly into rural and agriculture economies across the country without a substantial cost.

## **Ensure Food Security through Nutrition Program Access**

- ***Waive the prohibition on dual use of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Food Distribution Program Indian Reservations (FDPIR) in the same month***

The current prohibition against using both FDPIR and SNAP in the same month must be temporarily waived. This will allow Native households more food options at a time when it is needed the most, reduce administrative burdens on FDPIR and SNAP staff, and slow the inventory depletion at FDPIR sites. FDPIR sites are seeing increased take rates of food, because people are now taking more items within their allocation out of concern over local food availability. SNAP participants, especially those in rural areas are seeing limited availability of food, coupled with price increases. Providing FDPIR participants with additional SNAP benefits helps address both of these challenges while providing Native households with more options and food benefits at a time when it is needed the most. All FDPIR households should be provided the option to receive SNAP benefits either fitting their need, or be provided a set amount of \$100 in SNAP each month.



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