

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 24, 2011

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Secretary,

We write to respectfully request that the Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) administered by the Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS) be extended to the U.S. territories.

As you know, the FMPP was authorized in 2006 to expand domestic farmers' markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs, agri-tourism activities and other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities. Congress placed no limits on the scope of this program. We understand, however, that the Department of Agriculture in the previous Administration decided to bar eligible recipients in the territories from applying on the stated ground that the \$1 million allocated for the program in 2006 was insufficient to support administrative costs beyond the contiguous 50 states and the District of Columbia. Irrespective of the rationale for that initial decision, the fact remains that funding for the FMPP has now increased. The program was allocated \$10 million for Fiscal Years 2011 and 2012, clearly enough to expand the program administratively to the territories.

Recently, the AMS-sought comments on a proposed rule to clarify future eligibility and application requirements for the FMPP. AMS intends to use the comments received during this period to devise a final rule. We write to convey our hope and expectation that the program will be administered in the same way in the territories as in the 50 states. There is no principled basis to do otherwise, and we request your leadership to ensure this matter is appropriately handled under the final rule. Marketing support for small-scale agriculture is as essential in the territories as in any other part of the country. Continued exclusion of the jurisdictions we represent cannot be supported from a policy or fiscal point of view.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

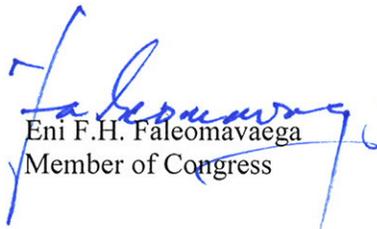


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