

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 3, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
219A Whitten Building  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

The *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act* includes \$9.5 billion in support for agricultural producers affected by the coronavirus outbreak. We write to urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to include seafood companies, including on the East coast, among the recipients of this assistance. The pandemic-driven closure of restaurants and other businesses has devastated the New England seafood industry, as about two-thirds of seafood is consumed in restaurants and outside the home. Fishermen and processors that supply restaurants and local food systems need support.

The fishing and seafood industries are essential drivers of the New England economy. In 2018, nearly \$650 million of fisheries products landed in Massachusetts, and processing plants and wholesalers had almost 4,900 employees.<sup>1</sup> With the loss of key customers, some processors in Massachusetts have already furloughed their staffs.

USDA is already well positioned to have *CARES Act* funding flow to the seafood industry. Historically, USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service Expenditures has purchased pollock and salmon through its the Section 32 program, which encourages domestic food consumption. Other USDA procurement programs could also readily include seafood products from New England. And although restaurants all across New England that serve seafood products are not currently open to diners, seafood processors are already organizing to turn restaurant product into ready-to-eat meals for Americans to enjoy at home during this crisis.

In order to help the fishing and seafood economy survive this crisis, we ask you to include the fishing industry and its participants in the financial support that the *CARES Act* provides for agricultural producers. We stand ready to help facilitate your engagement with the fishing and seafood community however we can.


If you have any questions about this request, please reach out to Claire Richer on Senator Markey's staff at [claire\\_richer@markey.senate.gov](mailto:claire_richer@markey.senate.gov).


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<sup>1</sup> NOAA Fisheries, *Fisheries of the United States, 2018* (Feb. 21, 2020), <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/fisheries-united-states-2018>.

Sincerely,

  
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

  
Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

  
Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress

  
William R. Keating  
Member of Congress