

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2202

April 16, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary, United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue –

I write today on behalf of United States (U.S) asparagus growers to request that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) use its authority to make a bonus purchase of 7 million pounds of frozen cuts-and-tips asparagus.

As you are aware, late last year the asparagus industry applied for a Section 32, bonus buy of 3.5 million pounds of frozen cuts-and-tips asparagus. I understand that this application has been delayed in part to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. At the time of the application, the asparagus industry was not aware of the impact which the Covid-19 would have on growers and farmers throughout the nation. Unfortunately, the pandemic has had a devastating impact on the market, crippling growers and processors throughout my district and resulting in the need for an additional purchase of 3.5 million pounds from the USDA.

When you consider that the asparagus industry is already facing questionable foreign trade practices, labor barriers, and historically low prices, along with the negative impact of Covid-19, it is critical the USDA announce a bonus purchase before the harvest begins in early May.

West Michigan has a long history of producing high quality, fresh, and processed asparagus. However, in 2019 alone, U.S. asparagus producers lost markets for over 3 million pounds of processed asparagus. As a result, many growers did not harvest their fields, ended the harvest early, or diverted their crop to other markets. The change in the market, due to many of the factors listed above, is threatening the short-term and long-term viability of the domestic asparagus production in our nation.

By purchasing additional asparagus prior to the start of the harvest season, the USDA would be providing critical relief to the industry. Michigan grown asparagus would also be a valuable nutritional addition to food banks, schools, and senior meal programs in this time of need.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter and consideration of this request. I look forward to continuing to work with you on these issues.

Sincerely,



Bill Huizenga
Member of Congress

