NASDA members serve at the nexus between agriculture, hunger and nutrition. NASDA is focused on connecting consumers to farmers, ranchers and local producers’ products. NASDA members regulate state dietary and labeling requirements as well as develop programs that reduce food and nutrition insecurity and food waste. Federal policy should be informed by the best available peer-reviewed science specific to human health and nutrition, and policy should not prejudice specific agricultural commodities, food products or farming practices.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES TO RESPOND TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC:

As the COVID-19 response continues, state departments of agriculture have proven their ability to effectively respond to the unique needs of the food and agriculture sector and rural communities. More resources are needed to guard against an uneven COVID-19 recovery that harms our food system and rural communities throughout America. Additional support for the priorities discussed below will provide state departments of agriculture with the flexibility to respond to the variable, and largely still unknown, food supply issues in their respective states.

NASDA’s Ask

We urge Congress to expand the funding capacity to state departments of agriculture to work in partnership with food producers, processors and consumers in their local communities to ensure regional and local food supply issues needs are met.

• Keeping Workers & Food Safe: Enhance access to Personal Protective Equipment and COVID-19 testing for food and agricultural workers. Maintain sufficient funding for appropriate staffing levels and operational functions for critical food safety and animal and plant health functions carried out by states including, but not limited to, food safety inspections, plant pest surveys, laboratory diagnoses and animal health inspections.

• Local & Regional Food Systems: Provide funding for relief and recovery programs with the specific needs of small/micro agricultural producers in mind. Support market development efforts to sustain and expand sales opportunities for small producers. Ensure charitable food organizations have access to agricultural products to meet community needs.

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• **Expansion of Food Processing & Distribution:** Invest in local processing infrastructure. Defray transportation costs of commodities that must be re-routed to other processing or distribution facilities. Provide incentives to fund capital equipment investments such as automated systems or conversion of product lines for new marketing outlets (e.g., wholesale packaging to retail packaging).

• **Support for Rural Recovery Efforts:** Collaborate with extension and other state agencies to:
  - Provide economic assistance to farmers, ranchers and rural communities
  - Develop tools that address stress among farmers and rural residents and deliver mental health services to rural communities
  - Fund agriculture workforce development and job creation workshops

**FOOD WASTE**

In October 2018, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Food and Drug Administration launched the Winning on Reducing Food Waste Initiative in a joint formal agreement. As part of the initiative, the agencies commit to work toward the national goal of reducing food loss and waste in the U.S. by 50 percent by 2030. This agreement, however, expired in 2020.

**NASDA’s Ask:**

• NASDA supports efforts to improve coordination and communication amongst federal, state and municipals stakeholders to use resources more efficiently and effectively to address food waste.

• NASDA supports extending the formal interagency collaborative agreement through 2030, consistent with the national goal commitment results.