



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

USDA Approves Statewide Plan for Disaster Food Distribution

Pennsylvania Food Banks Receive Waivers to Serve Those Adversely Impacted by COVID-19 Mitigation Efforts

HARRISBURG, Pa. (March 30, 2020) --- Following a statewide advocacy effort from the state's entire federal congressional delegation, along with Gov. Tom Wolf and state food bank and agricultural industry advocates, Pennsylvania Agriculture Sec. Russell Redding [has received federal approval](#) for the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture to operate a Disaster Household Distribution program.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) gave its approval on Friday, March 27 to implement the distribution program through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), giving food banks increased flexibility to serve Pennsylvanians adversely affected as a result of statewide COVID-19 mitigation efforts and enhancing public health and safety for workers, volunteers and emergency food recipients.

TEFAP is a federal program that helps supplement the diets of low-income Americans by providing them with emergency food assistance at no cost. USDA provides each state with 100% American-grown commodities --- known as USDA Foods --- and administrative funds to help defray costs related to TEFAP storage, transportation, and distribution.

Pennsylvania's Disaster Household Distribution program will temporarily waive the need for income eligibility paperwork to be filled out in order to receive USDA Foods delivered to the state as part of the TEFAP Trade Mitigation and TEFAP Bonus programs. The waiver is in place to ensure that the charitable food network can efficiently distribute a variety of nutritious foods, based on availability, to those most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of non-life-sustaining businesses.

"On behalf of the charitable food network, I'd like to express our sincere gratitude to Governor Wolf and our entire congressional delegation for their support through sign-on letters, personal letters, and phone calls to the USDA. It's not often that everyone agrees on an issue, and yet, we had 100 percent support from every lawmaker, and I think that speaks volumes," Feeding Pennsylvania Executive Director Jane Clements-Smith said.

"Our food banks and pantries are working hard to continue to meet the needs of the more than 1.5 million Pennsylvanians who face hunger, while supporting our neighbors who are

temporarily unemployed and need assistance,” Hunger-Free Pennsylvania Executive Director Sheila Christopher said. “We have made critical changes to the way we operate in order to protect our employees, volunteers, and the people we serve. Having this waiver will allow us to continue to be efficient in serving the additional need while ensuring the health and well-being of everyone involved.”

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About Feeding Pennsylvania:

Feeding Pennsylvania is a collaborative effort of nine Feeding America-affiliated food banks in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The mission of Feeding Pennsylvania is to promote and aid our member food banks in securing food and other resources to reduce hunger and food insecurity in our communities and across Pennsylvania and to provide a shared voice on the issues of hunger and food access within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. For more information about Feeding Pennsylvania, please visit www.feedingpa.org, connect with us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/FeedingPennsylvania, and follow us on Twitter and Instagram @FeedingPA.

About Hunger-Free Pennsylvania:

Hunger-Free Pennsylvania comprises a network of food banks, food pantries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, charities and other hunger relief organizations working together to end hunger in Pennsylvania. The network has 18 members serving all 67 counties. Learn more about Hunger-Free Pennsylvania online: www.hungerfreepa.org, or via Facebook: www.facebook.com/HungerFreePA.

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