

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 28, 2017

George Ervin "Sonny" Perdue III
Secretary, United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

I write today to ask that you use all available resources to swiftly provide Puerto Rico with much needed food aid. The devastation caused by Hurricane Maria has left behind a humanitarian crisis in Puerto Rico, with millions of people without power and many families in desperate need of food assistance.

While I am pleased that the United States Department of Agriculture, in coordination with other Federal Agencies, has already begun its initial assessment of conditions, it is clear, even with the most cursory information, that the Puerto Rican government will need significant resources, assistance, and administrative flexibility in the coming weeks and months. Based on the existing Major Disaster Declaration, I request that you undertake the following actions:

1. Assist local Puerto Rican authorities as they seek to implement Disaster SNAP (D-SNAP) under the provisions of the Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP) so that benefits are available for individuals who have left the Island and for those who remain, as conditions become more stable.
2. Expedite the delivery of existing USDA Foods orders and continue to assess the degree of loss of existing USDA Foods warehouse stores so that damaged commodities can be replaced quickly.
3. Support efforts to establish emergency feeding centers in coordination with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), other Federal agencies, local governments, and not-for-profit entities.
4. Provide infant and toddler formula and foods sufficient to meet project needs and coordinate with FEMA to ensure timely delivery of the products.
5. Resupply and reinstate household delivery of commodities as conditions permit.
6. Permit foods to be substituted in place of WIC approved foods that are currently unavailable.
7. Extend the time period to report food loss through individual affidavit and replace destroyed WIC foods.
8. Provide all necessary administrative flexibility, including waiver of congregate and nutrition standards, to ensure all school age children may receive meals under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the Child and Adult Cared Feeding Programs (CACFP).

I laud your efforts and those of the USDA staff under your direction as they have worked to support our fellow citizens in the wake of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma. I ask now that you redouble your efforts to aid the citizens of Puerto Rico in their time of greatest need.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Christopher Murphy
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator