

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 4, 2026

Ms. Orice Williams Brown
Acting Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Williams Brown:

We are writing to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) conduct a review of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farmer Bridge Assistance (FBA) and Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers (ASCF) programs. These programs are expected to distribute over \$12 billion to American farmers to provide relief from the consequences of President Trump's reckless tariffs and trade wars, yet USDA has not been sufficiently transparent and only has provided limited information about these payments and their recipients. Congress must be able to conduct proper oversight of these funds, and the American people deserve a fulsome understanding of how USDA is spending their hard-earned tax dollars.

Each year, USDA distributes billions of dollars to agricultural producers, from small family farms to large corporations and trusts. According to USDA's Economic Research Service, small operations tend to produce a larger share of commodities not covered by government payment programs, which are generally geared towards larger-scale row crop producers (e.g., corn and soybeans).¹

Over the past 19 months, President Trump's trade policy has jeopardized the livelihood of producers, particularly small farms and specialty crop producers, as a result of higher input costs due to tariffs and closed-off export markets. In December 2025, the Administration announced the FBA as a relief program for producers impacted by the president's own trade wars. Through the FBA, USDA will provide up to \$11 billion to row crop producers.² In February 2026, USDA announced the availability of \$1 billion through the Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers (ASCF) Program for specialty crops, sugar, and commodities not included in FBA.³ When payment rates were announced in May, that number increased to \$1.625 billion.

¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, *America's Farms and Ranches at a Glance: 2024 Edition* (December 2024).

² FBA-eligible commodities include corn, cotton, grains (e.g., rice, wheat), minor oil seeds (e.g., flax), pulses (e.g., chickpeas, lentils), and soybeans. As of April 30, 2026, USDA disbursed \$9.7 billion, primarily to producers in the Midwest and Texas (see [here](#)).

³ U.S. Department of Agriculture, [USDA Announces Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers Impacted by Unfair Market Disruptions | USDA](#) (February 2026). ASCF-eligible specialty crops include fruits (e.g., apple, blueberry, nectarine), legumes (e.g., lima beans, peas), nuts (e.g., almond, pistachio), and vegetables (e.g., beets, broccoli, turnips). Dry edible beans and peas covered by FBA are not eligible for ASCF.

Last year, many members of Congress wrote to President Trump and USDA urging this Administration to ensure any agriculture trade relief program included guardrails and mechanisms to direct funding to producers who truly needed relief rather than simply enriching the largest agribusinesses or foreign-owned conglomerates, and to provide transparency into the process for establishing and executing the program. While USDA has provided some insight into their method for calculating payment rates and the geographic distribution of payments, many of our key recommendations aimed at increasing transparency, protecting taxpayer dollars, and ensuring relief gets where its most needed remain unfulfilled for both programs.

Therefore, we ask GAO to conduct a review of the FBA and ASCF programs to address the following questions:

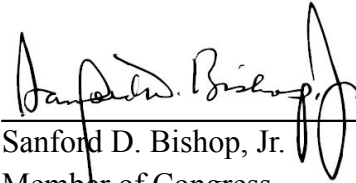
- 1.) To what extent did USDA incorporate lessons learned from the Market Facilitation Program (MFP), including recommendations from multiple GAO reports, regarding the process for setting up and executing the FBA and ASCF?
 - a. The 2021 GAO report on the MFP—a similar agricultural tariff relief program launched during President Trump’s first term—noted that USDA’s methodology overestimated the harm of tariffs to 14 out of 29 commodity crops, resulting in disproportionate payments within and across crops and geographic regions that, by and large, went to the biggest players in the agriculture industry. GAO also pointed out that USDA developed the MFP with little transparency, preventing the Department from receiving outside input on how to improve its methodology.
- 2.) To what extent did USDA implement “Grow American” requirements (e.g., those outlined in the *Buy American Agriculture Act*) as part of the FBA and ASCF to ensure taxpayer dollars go to supporting American farmers and not disproportionately to large agribusinesses or indirectly to foreign-owned conglomerates?
- 3.) What factors did USDA consider in determining the amount available, payment rates, and maximum payment limitations for the FBA and ASCF programs?
- 4.) What was the distribution of payments under FBA and ASCF by type of producer (crop type, size of farm, and annual farm income)? By payment size categorized by tranches of \$25,000 up to maximum payment amount (e.g., \$0-25,000, \$25,001-\$50,000, etc.)?
- 5.) What proportion of recipients had a net farm income for 2023 of less than \$250,000, as recorded in the data in the Economic Research Service publication “Farm Income and Wealth Statistics” as of December 3, 2024 (with such information being collected at the time of application for aid)?
- 6.) What steps did USDA take to ensure that proper payment amounts went out to eligible producers through the FBA and ASCF programs?
- 7.) What challenges did USDA face in administering the FBA and ASCF programs and what actions has USDA taken to address these challenges?

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,



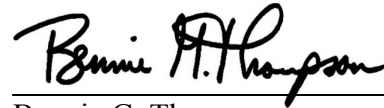
Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress



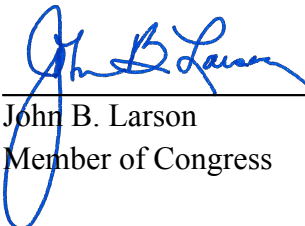
Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress



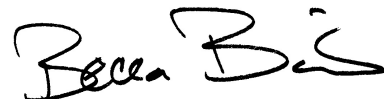
JM Tokuda
Member of Congress



Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress



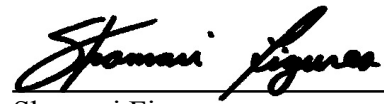
John B. Larson
Member of Congress



Becca Balint
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Shomari Figures
Member of Congress



Chris Deluzio
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