January 14, 2019

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

Dear Secretary Perdue,

I write to voice serious concerns regarding recent reports that approximately $5 million from USDA’s farm aid program will be paid out to the Brazilian-owned meatpacking firm JBS. With farmers in Wisconsin and around the country already struggling to stay afloat, it is unthinkable that millions of dollars from this extremely limited aid would be distributed to foreign entities.

This aid, which is intended to support domestic farmers impacted by retaliatory trade actions, should be focused solely on farmers at home, who are increasingly at risk of losing key market access around the world. In Wisconsin alone, exports that were subject to retaliation plummeted thirty percent in October 2018. Further, Wisconsin farmers and businesses looking to export their commodities and products around the world have faced over $71 million in new retaliatory tariffs. Wisconsin farmers are facing these increased costs in addition to an already daunting environment forcing many to give up their farms that have been in their families for generations.

This troubling report comes just two months after another report of aid going to a second foreign entity, with the award only being rescinded following demands from congressional leaders. Clearly additional mechanisms must be created or enforced to prevent taxpayer dollars from being used to bailout foreign companies. To ensure this aid will only be used to support our farmers, please respond to the following questions.

1. What is the total amount of funding that has been provided to foreign companies?
2. How many companies housed in foreign nations have received USDA’s farm aid?
3. What mechanisms are in place to inform the public that a foreign owned business has applied for payments?
4. Have you considered any program improvements to increase domestic utilization over foreign competitors?

Thank you for your attention to these concerns. Protecting farmers in Wisconsin and throughout the country requires a shared commitment from both your agency and Congress, and I look forward to working with you to ensure this farm aid is used most effectively to support our farmers.

Sincerely,

Ron Kind
Member of Congress