WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 21, 2020) – On a webinar today, USDA’s Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS) shared the details of the new “Buy Fresh” program to purchase $100 million per month in fresh produce from regional and local distributors whose workforce has been significantly impacted by the closure of restaurants, hotels, and other food service entities. The program is expected to continue for six months.

“We commend USDA for their innovated approach and developing a program that will help the entire fresh produce supply chain for the next several months,” said Robert Guenther, Senior Vice President of Public Policy for United Fresh. “We ask the industry to lean in and support this effort and show the diversity and ingenuity of how our supply chain can work with the federal government to get our delicious and healthy products to those most in need.”

This program come on the heels of United Fresh’s March 20 letter to Secretary Perdue and leadership in Congress to create such a program that would address current and upcoming produce supplies that could be moved through industry market channels to those most in need. This was followed by an industry letter to USDA along with Congressional support. We applaud USDA for this innovative approach and response to our industry needs, and look forward to working with them as his program rolls out.

USDA announced they are anticipating to issue solicitations on April 24, 2020 to invite proposals from offerors to supply commodity boxes to non-profit organizations, identified by the offeror, on a mutually agreeable, recurring schedule. Awards are expected to be announced by May 8, 2020 and the program be fully operational by May 15, 2020. USDA will award contracts for the purchase of the agricultural products, the assembly of commodity boxes and delivery to identified non-profit organizations that can receive and distribute to those in need.

AMS outlined five different box types: 1) fresh fruits and vegetables; 2) dairy products; 3) pre-cooked meat; 4) Combination box of fresh produce, dairy products, and pre-cooked meat; and 5) fluid milk products by unit size.

Regarding fresh fruit and vegetables boxes, USDA has outlined for following:

- Products and processing must be of domestic origin
- Consumer-friendly packaging (but does not need to be retail packs)
• Awardees must identify and manage relationships with food banks and non-profits and come up with mutually agreeable delivery and box type terms
• Contracts issued in seven regions (Mid-Atlantic, Mountain, Mountain Plains, Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, Western) and proposals can be submitted for multiple or partial regions

Full requirements and specifications will be available when the RFP is released on April 24th. To receive updates by e-mail, subscribe online by visiting: “Stay up to date on USDA Food Purchases” available on the AMS Commodity Procurement website, https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food-to-usda/usda-food-box-distribution-program

United Fresh will continue to work closely with USDA to ensure that the design of this program can be effective and efficient in supporting the fresh produce supply chain and getting fresh fruits and vegetables to people in need.

###

About United Fresh Produce Association
Founded in 1904, the United Fresh Produce Association brings together companies across every segment of the fresh produce supply chain, including growers, shippers, fresh cut processors, wholesalers, distributors, retailers, foodservice operators, industry suppliers and allied associations. We empower industry leaders to shape sound government policy. We deliver the resources and expertise companies need to succeed in managing complex business and technical issues. We provide the training and development individuals need to advance their careers in produce. Through these endeavors, we unite our industry with a common purpose – to build long-term value for our members and grow produce consumption. For more information, visit www.unitedfresh.org or call 202-303-3400.