



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 27, 2021

### **County of Ventura approves \$3.65 million in additional funding for Farmworker Household Assistance Program to help farmworkers struggling from ongoing impacts of COVID-19**

Ventura, CA – Today, the Board of Supervisors approved an additional \$3.65 million in Federal Coronavirus Relief Funds to support the Farmworker Household Assistance Program (FHAP) bringing total support to more than \$7.1 million to assist farmworkers and their families. This funding will provide financial aid of \$1,000 to eligible households who were previously funded through this program and who still reside in the County.

“We appreciate the opportunity to provide assistance where it’s needed most. This program is important in supporting Farmworkers who are vital members of our community. This will help those who are struggling from the impacts of the pandemic and those who support us all through the agricultural products they provide throughout the year,” said County Executive Officer Mike Powers.

The Board of Supervisors approved the first FHAP program design in September 2020, which was a collaboration between the Board and a generous group of private donors comprised of agricultural employers, farmworker advocates and community-based organizations. The program required proof of residency, financial hardship due to COVID, and prioritized eligibility to farmworkers at very low-income levels of 50% or below the Average Median Income. It served 3,461 farmworker households with a \$1,000 grant, a distribution that totaled just over \$3 million in federal CARES Act funding in conjunction with about \$400,000 in private donor funds collected in a Farmworker Household Assistance trust that was managed by VCCF. The Human Services Agency administered the program on behalf of the donor group and distributed all the funds before the end of last year.

Farmworkers have continued to work throughout the pandemic. Many experienced reductions in hours due to decreased demand for certain crops used primarily by restaurants. Others have needed to reduce their hours to care for school-age children, while still others have incurred unexpected expenses, all of which have impacted the ability to meet the most basic needs of housing, food and medical care.

“As the pandemic has continued and these farmworker households continue to struggle and endure financial hardships disproportionately, this funding aims to provide additional relief and stability while the challenges to meet basic needs persists,” said Melissa Livingston, Director of the Ventura County Human Services Agency, which is administering the program.



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“These farmworker families who continue to struggle will be receiving a second \$1,000 grant under the Farmworker Household Assistance Program,” said Ellen Brokaw from Brokaw Ranch Company. “Our county leaders have stepped up again to help these essential workers who also are our neighbors. Private donations currently being raised will provide further help to even more families. The need is huge. The Ventura County community cares.”

For every \$0.50 that is donated to the Farmworker Household Assistance Program by private donors, the Ventura County Community Foundation will also donate \$1.00 to the fund through a challenge match grant amount of up to \$500,000. Every dollar donated will go directly to farmworker families in need. To donate to the FHAP, please visit [www.vccf.org/fhap](http://www.vccf.org/fhap).

"Since day one of the pandemic, farmworker families have been labelled essential. Here in Ventura County, about half of farmworkers come from indigenous communities and many have faced economic stress, housing uncertainty, and other pandemic related burdens. As the pandemic continues, the strain on many of our farmworker families cannot be overstated. Through county leadership on moving this additional funding, our families can tangibly see that help is on the way," said Genevieve Flores-Haro Associate Director Mixteco Indígena Community Organizing Project.

Supporting the agricultural community was a priority before the pandemic and this commitment allowed for swift action with partners early on and throughout the ongoing pandemic response. The agricultural industry, growers, farmworker advocates, the Farmworker Resource Program, Agricultural Commissioner's Office, Office of the CEO, Human Services Agency, Logrando Bienestar (the County's program to connect Latino and Indigenous community members to mental health services), Public Health and community partners have worked together with weekly coordination calls, resource support, resource outreach, health education, COVID-19 testing on site, vaccination events on site, waiving fees at public health clinics, funding extended food pop up sites in partnership with Food Share and providing isolation and quarantine facilities to support farmworkers needing assistance. The FHAP was developed through this partnership with a goal of helping those in need. Learn more about the Farmworker Resource Program at [www.vchsa.org/ag](http://www.vchsa.org/ag).

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