

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

February 14, 2008

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chairman  
Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee  
328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Collin Peterson  
Chairman  
Committee on Agriculture  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss  
Ranking Member  
Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee  
328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Agriculture  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

We write to thank you for your leadership in including strong specialty crops provisions in both the Senate and House versions of the Farm Bill, and reiterate our strong support for maintaining these important programs as you work through conference.

As you know, specialty crops represent approximately 50 percent of U.S. crop cash receipts and are of great significance both to farmers working the land and consumers seeking healthy foods. Therefore, we continue to believe very strongly that the Farm Bill should include mandatory funding for programs that support and enhance this important sector of American agriculture.

As you work through the conference process, we ask for your continued leadership and support of mandatory funding and retaining the highest funding levels for specialty crop programs.

Both the House and Senate bills include funding for programs that are vital to specialty crop growers. The Specialty Crop Block Grant program, which helps local stakeholders with local projects, research programs that will improve the taste and quality of healthful foods, and expansion of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable (Snack) Program nationwide are three examples of significant and valuable investments made in both the House and Senate bills. These and other programs will increase the competitiveness of our specialty crop farmers, and will encourage healthy foods and community projects that will help develop life-long health through consumption of fruits and vegetables.

We are pleased that the Senate bill included approximately \$2.2 billion in mandatory funding over five years for specialty crops, and the House bill provided approximately \$1.6 billion over five years. We strongly urge you to ensure that funding for these vital programs remains at the highest possible level during conference negotiations. We understand that you face a difficult task in crafting a final version of the Farm Bill, and we appreciate your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Patty Murray

Joe Salazar

Alleny

Bill Niskanen

Pete Dominici

Jon Kyl

Jack Reed

Bill Nelson

Tom Carper

Elizabeth

Mike Simpson

Eric Lipton

Jim

Randy Kuhl

Kevin McCarthy

Steve Kagen, M.D.

Kirsten E. Gillibrand

Peter King

Dianne Feinstein  
Chuck Schumer

Robert Menendez

Frank R. Lautenberg

Barbara Boxer

Sam Blumenthal

Mike Crapo

Susan M. Collins

Elizabeth Dole

Carl Levin

John F. Kerry

Sheldon Whitehouse

Howard L. Berman

Carl Blumen

Ken Calvert

Eljoh E. Cummings

Wayne T. Gilchrest

Wally Herger

Jim Hahn

George Radanovic

Elton Gallegly

Louise M. Slaughter

Danah Hovley

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Chris Dodd

Al Gore

Phil Martinez

Al Gore

Joe Biden

Barack Obama

Maria Cantello

Alan Irtzy

John Hall

Wale Castle

Allen Boyd

Law D. Dedy

Bob Filner

John T. Doherty

Eileen Tarscher

Jim McDermott

Lair Capps

Dy Wollen

Sam Pan

Mazie Hirono

James Pan

Lewin Moore

V.A. Dutch Ruppelberg

Bygia June

Jed Hardy

John Puchner

Edan H. Lutne

Mike Mehand

Cathy McNamee-Rodger

Mike Tamen

Miss Portio

No. 377

Ed Portio

~~John~~

Mike Shomper

Samuel Dine

Peter Weld

Taddy McOtter

Deer

Russ Carnah

Ains Van Hellen

Mary Bone-Mack

~~Tam~~

Heather L Gilson

Bill Sali

Ron Klein

Rubin Henjoia