

September 24, 2010

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Agriculture Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Av., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable Lisa Jackson
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
Ariel Rios Building
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Administrator Jackson:

We request your assistance with a serious problem facing our national agriculture community: the invasive species the *Halyomorpha halys*, commonly known as the Brown Marmorated Stink Bug. Both farmers and our local economies face profound harm if we fail to take action; damage from this insect could prove to be a national crisis. Just in the past few weeks, orchards in the Mid-Atlantic have discovered more than 50 percent crop damage attributed to the stink bug, up from zero in past years.

Introduced to the U.S. in the mid-1990's, *Halyomorpha halys* damages all types of crops including apples, corn, soybeans, peaches, pears, watermelons, cantaloupe, tomatoes, peppers, blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, wine grapes, and more. It affects which in turn might affect the quality of milk from dairy cows. Young trees such as sugar maples and other ornamentals also incur damage. While its most profound damage is occurring in the mid-Atlantic region, the *Halyomorpha halys* is fast moving and now found in 29 states.

The *Halyomorpha halys* has no known predators in the United States. The mechanism by which it migrates has made control and eradication difficult, a situation which is exacerbated by its classification as an unregulated pest. Existing plant protection products are only minimally effective because of the way the insect feeds. The *Halyomorpha halys* uses its straw like structure to pierce the fruit or vegetable thereby avoids contact with plant protection products.

If we are to avoid future crop loss, it is crucial for government, industry and academia to collaborate both on research programs, and on control and eradication strategies. This collaboration is particularly important as it relates to the vital resources that can be brought to bear from the USDA and EPA. The lack of action by your department and agency respectively may result in a major national crisis.

In the long-term, critical research programs will need to be carried-out through USDA, state colleges of agriculture and the private sector. In the short term, however, we ask that the USDA fast track the re-classification of Halyomorpha halys from a non-regulated pest to one that is regulated.

Additionally, we request that resources be made available through APHIS to expand monitoring activities as well as control and eradication programs. Likewise, we ask that EPA evaluate existing plant protection tools and facilitate collaboration amongst the various federal research agencies, universities and private companies to ultimately facilitate the registration and/or emergency use of effective pesticides.

Time is of the essence. The goal is to marshal all available government resources to develop an effective control that can be implemented by next spring. Your cooperation is necessary and immediate action is imperative.

Sincerely,

Roscoe G. Bartlett (MD-6)

Todd Russell Platts (PA-19)

Shelley Capito (WV-2)

Bill Shuster (PA-9)

Frank Kratovil (MD-2)

C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger (MD-2)

Steny Hoyer (MD-5)

Dennis Cardoza (CA-18)

Charlie Dent (PA-15)

Frank Lucas (OK-3)

Leonard Lance (NJ-7)

Collin Peterson (MN-7)

Frank Wolf (VA-10)

Peter Welch (VT-at large)

Tim Holden (PA-17)