

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 17, 2019

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

Thank you for your leadership supporting our nation's farmers and overseeing the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). We appreciate the opportunity to work together to help our agriculture communities thrive. We understand that the USDA is actively working on another trade aid package to assist our farmers. We ask that as your office creates this trade mitigation package, it ensures that all specialty crops are included.

Farmers are the bedrock of our rural economy, representing one of our nation's top industries. They are navigating declining commodity prices and unstable trade markets all the while net farm income continues to fall. Our farmers deserve predictability in national trade policies, especially given the impact of trade deals on the agricultural economy. As these trade negotiations and tariff issues persist, it is important to ensure the needs of fruit, vegetable and tree nut producers are heard and reflected in these policies.

As you know, the Market Facilitation Program (MFP) was created to help those who were directly impacted by foreign retaliatory tariffs and the loss of traditional export markets. MFP helped address the financial sting of tariffs for some farmers, but the reality is that many were consciously left out of this program, such as walnut, pecan and table grape growers. While we were pleased to see sweet cherries and almonds added to the MFP, there are many other specialty crops that have suffered from the ongoing trade disputes that deserve to be included in the next trade assistance package. As a result we request that specialty crop farmers receive direct assistance payments in similar fashion to their program crop brethren.

Additionally, we would like to express our support in expanding any export promotion program that may be a component in the trade package USDA is developing. Specialty crop growers throughout the country have spent decades developing these markets that are now at risk. As such they will need to rely heavily on export promotion and market retention efforts to stay competitive. Furthermore, with higher than average adjusted gross incomes, we anticipate not all our growers will be able to access a direct payment option, should one be made available to them. We therefore request all unused direct payment funds be reallocated towards the export promotion component of the trade assistance package (with that money maintained for the respective specialty crop).

Thank you, Secretary Perdue, for your attention to this important issue. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Josh Harder

Josh Harder
Member of Congress

Jimmy Panetta

Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

Kim Schrier

Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress

Jim Costa

Jim Costa
Member of Congress

Earl L. 'Buddy' Carter

Earl L. 'Buddy' Carter
Member of Congress

T.J. Cox

T.J. Cox
Member of Congress

Salud Carbajal

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Doug LaMalfa

Doug LaMalfa
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Tulsi Gabbard

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Angie Craig

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David Scott

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Rick W. Allen

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Jerry McNerney

Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress

Harley Rouda

Harley Rouda
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress