

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 5, 2018

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on
Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable K. Michael Conaway
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on
Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Collin C. Peterson
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Stabenow, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Peterson:

As members of the House Specialty Crop Caucus, we write to request your support for specialty crop-related programs in the Farm Bill. As the Farm Bill Conference committee meets to work out the differences, one thing is clear – we must support the ever-expanding specialty crop industry.

Specialty crops represent approximately \$70 billion in farm receipts annually, a number that is multiplied when you consider their economic impact in communities large and small, rural and urban. The house and senate Farm Bills demonstrate the important role the specialty crop industry plays in domestic and international markets, both of which are vital to the industry's success.

Any Farm Bill must include strong bipartisan and bicameral support for specialty crops. These include basic underlying principles which are included in both the House and Senate bills that enable growers, shippers and retailers to benefit from sound policy. These priorities include:

- Provide full funding for the Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) at \$80 million a year, as well as \$25 million a year for citrus research, such as the newly-proposed Emergency Citrus Disease Research & Development Trust Fund. SCRI is continuously oversubscribed and stagnantly funded, despite skyrocketing consumer demand and growing farming operations. The citrus industry's collapse at the hands of an aggressive pest-transmitted disease highlights the dual need for continued citrus research and bolstered specialty crop research.

- Maintain full funding for the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC) program, and address much-needed regulatory reforms to the application process. TASC assists producers in dealing with the growing phytosanitary and technical barriers to trade in foreign markets. Given the highly sensitive trade conflicts the U.S. currently faces, ensuring a strong and well-funded TASC program is more vital than ever. We also support adopting ways to streamline and strengthen the program's operations, to ensure U.S. producers are not being discouraged from otherwise vital resources. Utilizing the tools included in Title III, we can expand trade opportunities and ensure market access for existing and developing markets through the Market Access Program and Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops.
- A strong commitment to research programs under Title VII. This includes the prioritization of automation and mechanization research, the proposed Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority (AGARDA) that focuses on high-risk agriculture and food challenges, and the Urban and Indoor Agriculture Research Program which supports research of these and other emerging agriculture production.
- Use of existing federal nutrition programs such as Section 32 purchases, DOD Fresh, Food Insecurity and Nutrition Incentives Program (FINI), Harvest Health Pilot Program, and the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program that will encourage greater consumption of nutritious fruits, vegetable and tree nuts that will benefit those in need.
- Full funding of pest and disease programs under APHIS and market expansion programs contained in the Specialty Crop Block Grants.

The challenges the specialty crop industry faces, both now and in the years ahead, are significant. Even while dealing with challenges, the specialty crop industry has continued to thrive. To continue this success, the industry relies on the certainty and support that only a five-year Farm Bill can provide. We urge you to vocally support and advocate for strong specialty crop provisions as you work to finalize the Farm Bill.

Sincerely,



JIM COSTA
Member of Congress



FRED UPTON
Member of Congress



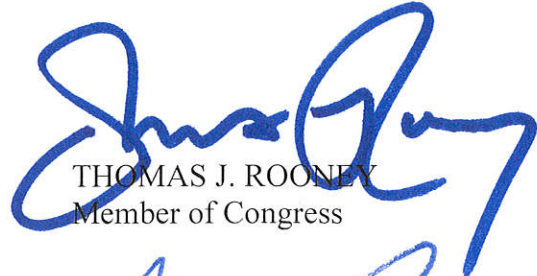
KURT SCHRADER
Member of Congress



MARIO DIAZ-BALART
Member of Congress



PETER A. DeFAZIO
Member of Congress



THOMAS J. ROONEY
Member of Congress



RICK LARSEN
Member of Congress



MIKE SIMPSON
Member of Congress



JOHN GARAMENDI
Member of Congress



TOM REED
Member of Congress



ZOE LOFGREN
Member of Congress



SCOTT R. TIPTON
Member of Congress



SUZANNE BONAMICI
Member of Congress



SANFORD D. BISHOP
Member of Congress



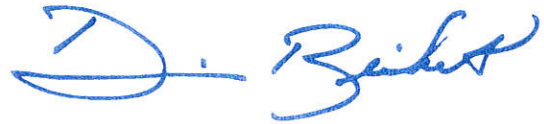
COLLEEN HANABUSA
Member of Congress



ALCEE L. HASTINGS
Member of Congress



EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress



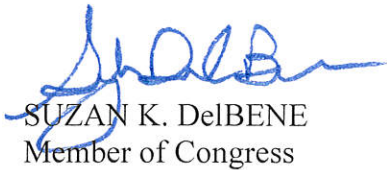
DAVID G. REICHERT
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GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLÁN
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DAN NEWHOUSE
Member of Congress



SUZAN K. DELBENE
Member of Congress



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ROSA L. DeLAURO
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JOE COURTNEY
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BILL HUIZENGA
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BRIAN HIGGINS
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DEREK KILMER
Member of Congress



JAIME HERRERA BEUTLER
Member of Congress



JUAN VARGAS
Member of Congress



JACK BERGMAN
Member of Congress



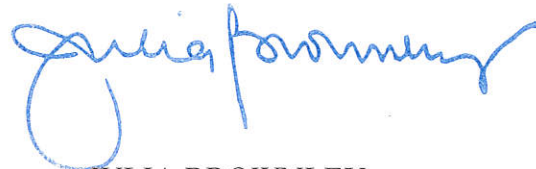
PETER WELCH
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JOHN R. MOOLENAAR
Member of Congress



JIMMY PANETTA
Member of Congress



JULIA BROWNLEY
Member of Congress



JOHN KATKO
Member of Congress



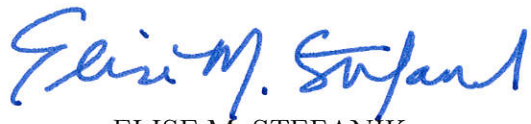
BARBARA COMSTOCK
Member of Congress



CHRIS COLLINS
Member of Congress



CATHY McMORRIS RODGERS
Member of Congress

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ELISE M. STEFANIK
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. A. Ross".

DENNIS A. ROSS
Member of Congress

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SALUD O. CARBAJAL
Member of Congress

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WILLIAM R. KEATING
Member of Congress