



**AMERICAN AGRICULTURE.
STRONGER TOGETHER.**

August 29, 2018

The Honorable Mike Conaway
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman
Senate Committee on Agriculture
328A Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture
328 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Farm Bill Conference Committee Leaders:

We appreciate your leadership in establishing a formal conference committee on the 2018 Farm Bill. On behalf of the 120 specialty crop organizations and 350 individual specialty crops across America, the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance (Alliance) encourages you to negotiate and finalize a conference report for the 2018 Farm Bill before the end of the current expiration of the 2014 Farm Bill in September.

We also commend the work of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees as both of these critical legislative endeavors build on the strategic funding and policy direction the Alliance has pursued in previous Farm Bills. Most certainly, both Farm Bills that were passed over the summer, will enhance the competitive position of specialty crop growers across the country. These include initiatives and programs related to market access and expansion, production research, combatting invasive pest and disease, increasing consumption of fruits, vegetables, and tree nuts, promotional tools, and infrastructure investment.

In particular as you begin these important negotiations, we would like to highlight important priorities that are included in both bills and we strongly support their inclusion in the final conference report:

- Full funding for key specialty crop programs including State Block Grants, Pest and Disease, existing Section 32 purchases, DOD Fresh Program, and National Clean Plant Network.
- Both bills recognize the Food Insecurity and Nutrition Incentive Program (FINI) and have included appropriate resources that will continue the important work of incentivizing SNAP recipients to make healthy choices.
- Reauthorizes the Office of Pest Management and the Produce Safety Education Programs at USDA
- Both bills include several positive changes to the organics program, and the oversight of organic imports which we commend. The Alliance believes that the House and Senate language on organics related to the NOSB can be merged together and supports the combined changes being included in the final conference report.

- Finally, both bills authorize additional research into making improvements to greenhouse and citrus insurance policies under the crop insurance program.

In addition, the Alliance supports the following provisions in the Senate version of H.R. 2 (*the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018*) and request that these provisions be included in the final conference report:

- Trade Programs under Title III that help increase market access including the Market Access Program and Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops. The Alliance specifically supports Senate language that ensures minimum levels of funding for TASC.
- Harvesting Health Pilot Program in Title IV
- Both bills also include full funding for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. However, the Alliance supports the House receding to the Senate regarding policy changes directed at eligible commodities.
- Value Added Agricultural Marketing Development and Program Grants in Title VI
- Both bills include full funding for the Specialty Crop Research Initiative in the research title which the Alliance supports. The Alliance strongly supports the House receding to the Senate with respect to funding the Emergency Citrus Disease Research & Development program through a standalone Trust Fund at \$25 million annually while maintaining full funding for SCRI at \$80 million annually. The Alliance will continue to work with conferees on any technical issues with regard to how the standalone program would be administered.
- The Alliance supports full funding of the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program included in both bills. In addition, the Alliance requests the House recede to the Senate regarding language pertaining to administration of multistate projects and performance measures.
- The Alliance supports the Senate language contained in Title VII which creates a comprehensive strategy to prioritize automation and mechanization for USDA research programs.
- The Senate bill includes two new research programs in Title VII, the Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority (AGARDA) that focuses on high-risk agriculture and food challenges, and the Urban and Indoor Agriculture Research Program that helps support research of these and other emerging agriculture production. The Alliance supports the creation of these new programs.
- Both bills recognize the Food Insecurity and Nutrition Incentive Program (FINI) and have included appropriate resources that will continue the important work of looking at ways to incentivize SNAP recipients in making healthy choices. In addition, the Alliance supports the House receding to the Senate on language which ensures FINI prioritizes healthy choices where SNAP consumers shop the most.
- The Alliance supports moving the Noninsured Crop Assistance Program (NAP) into Title I as the Senate does and supports language found in the Senate version that requires NAP data to be better shared/utilized, with the purpose of creating or improving insurance products for more types of commodities.
- The Alliance supports provisions in the Senate bill authorizing the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct crop and pesticide use surveys, through the Office of Pest Management Policy, for use on risk assessments and mitigation for active ingredients.

Finally, the Alliance also supports the following provisions contained in the House version of H.R. 2 (*The Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018*) and request that these provisions be included in the final conference report:

- The Alliance opposes limitations on program eligibility based on AGI limits and ask that the conference agreement be maintained at \$900,000 under current law, if not increased to a higher level. In addition, the Alliance strongly supports the House language in Title II which allows USDA to waive AGI restrictions on a case-by-case basis for environmentally-sensitive land.
- The Alliance supports Title II EQIP funding increases provided in the House Farm Bill and also supports removal of the livestock carve out of EQIP, as a way to provide additional opportunities for specialty crops to access this important program.
- There are several outstanding regulatory issues that have long been industry-wide concerns. The House bill includes several reforms, including ones related to NPDES and methyl bromide. The Alliance supports these provisions being included in the conference report.

We understand the difficult and challenging task of passing a final Farm Bill. However, this conference represents an opportunity to complete the collaborative efforts of agriculture stakeholders that have worked hard over the last 18 months to pass a more equitable Farm Bill. On behalf of our Alliance members we encourage you to complete this bill quickly and include much needed resources for specialty crops across the United States.

John Keeling
Executive Vice President & CEO
National Potato Council
SCFBA Steering Committee Co-Chair

Tom Nassif
President
Western Growers Association
SCFBA Steering Committee Co-Chair

Mike Stuart
President & CEO
Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association
SCFBA Steering Committee Co-Chair

Robert Guenther
Sr. Vice President of Public Policy
United Fresh Produce Association
SCFBA Steering Committee Secretariat

CC: House and Senate Farm Bill Conferees

Attachment: List of Specialty Crop Coalition Members



SCFBA

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Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance Organization

Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance Steering Committee

Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association, *Co-Chair*

National Potato Council, *Co-Chair*

Western Growers Association, *Co-Chair*

United Fresh Produce Association, *Executive Secretariat*

American Mushroom Institute

American Pistachio Growers

AmericanHort

Blue Diamond Growers

California Association of Winegrape Growers

California Citrus Mutual

California Fresh Fruit Association

California Table Grape Commission

Florida Tomato Exchange

Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association

Idaho Grower Shippers Association

Idaho Potato Commission

National Council of Farmer Cooperatives

National Grape Research Alliance

National Watermelon Association

Northwest Horticultural Council

Produce Marketing Association

Sunkist Growers

Sun-Maid Growers of California

Texas International Produce Association

U.S. Apple Association

Washington State Potato Commission

Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine

Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance Member Organizations

Alabama Watermelon Association

Arizona Nursery Association

Arizona Winegrowers Association

Buy California Marketing Agreement

California Association of Nurseries & Garden Centers

California Canning Peach Association

California Dried Plum Board

California Farm Bureau

California Fig Institute
California Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement
California Strawberry Commission
California Walnut Commission
Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association
Cherry Marketing Institute
Colorado Potato Administrative Committee
Colorado Wine Industry Development Board
Connecticut Farm Wine Development Council
Connecticut Vineyard & Winery Association
Cranberry Institute
Driscoll's
Empire State Potato Growers
Florida Citrus Mutual
Florida Citrus Packers
Florida Strawberry Association
Florida Sweet Corn Exchange
Florida Watermelon Association
Georgia Watermelon Association
Grower-Shipper Association of Central California
Hillcrest Orchards
Idaho Wine Commission
Indian River Citrus League
Indiana-Illinois Watermelon Association
Leafy Greens Council
Maine Potato Board
Maryland-Delaware Watermelon Association
Maryland Wineries Association
Miami-Dade County
Michigan Apple Committee
Minnesota Area II Potato Growers Research and Promotion Council
Minnesota Grape Growers Association
Missouri Wine & Grape Board
National Berry Crops Initiative
National Grape Cooperative Association
National Onion Association
National Peach Council
New England Vegetable and Berry Growers
New Mexico Wine Growers Association
New York Apple Association
New York Wine & Grape Foundation
North American Blueberry Council
North American Raspberry & Blackberry Association
North American Strawberry Growers Association

North Carolina Blueberry Council
North Carolina Grape & Wine Council
North Carolina Potato Association
North Carolina Strawberry Association
North Carolina Watermelon Association
Northern Kentucky Vintners & Grape Growers Association
Northern Plains Potato Growers
Ocean Spray Cranberries, Inc.
Ohio Wine Producers Association
Oklahoma Grape Growers & Wine Makers Association
Oregon Potato Commission
Oregon Raspberry & Blackberry Commission
Oregon Strawberry Commission
Oregon Winegrowers Association
Oregon Wine Board
Peace River Valley Citrus Growers Association
Potato Growers of Idaho
Rocky Mountain Association of Vintners & Viticulturists
Society of American Florists
South Carolina Watermelon Association
Tennessee Farm Winegrowers Association
Texas Citrus Mutual
Texas Vegetable Association
Texas Watermelon Association
Texas Wine & Grape Growers Association
United Fresh Potato Growers of Idaho
United Potato Growers of America
U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council
U.S. Sweet Potato Council
Virginia Apple Growers Association
Virginia Wineries Association
Washington Red Raspberry Commission
Washington State Apple Commission
Washington State Tree Fruit Association
Western Watermelon Association
Washington Association of Wine Grape Growers
Wine Institute
Winegrape Growers of America
Winegrowers Association of Georgia
WineAmerica
WineMichigan
Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association