

Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance

Working to Make American Agriculture Stronger

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact:

Ray Gilmer, United Fresh Produce Assoc. 202-303-3425

Lisa Lochridge, Florida Fruit & Vegetable Assoc. 321-214-5206

Specialty Crop Producers Applaud Senators' Support of Farm Bill Priorities

*Bipartisan Senate letter urges Ag Committee to build
on Farm Bill investments*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance (SCFBA) today applauded a letter signed by 32 senators calling for a 2012 Farm Bill that will build on previous specialty crop investments. In the letter to Senate Agriculture Committee Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) and Ranking Member Pat Roberts (R-Kan.), the senators said the specialty crop programs established in the 2008 Farm Bill generated significant benefits for consumers, producers and farm communities.

The letter notes that investments in the 2008 Farm Bill included “research, invasive pest and disease mitigation, foreign market development, nutrition and targeted state-level funding for local initiatives. This translated into job creation, trade expansion, infrastructure investment for capacity building, targeted research for new innovations and technology, and increased access for fruits and vegetables in federal nutrition programs.”

Specialty crops are a critical component of the agriculture economy and represent nearly half of all farmgate crop value in America.

John Keeling, National Potato Council Executive VP and CEO, and SCFBA co-chair, welcomed the support from the bipartisan group. “As Congress sets the nation’s agriculture policy for the next four years, the health of our citizens and the health of our economy are at stake. We need sustained programs that put more fruits and vegetables on Americans’ plates, enhance our industry’s efforts to fight invasive pests and diseases, and help us to market our crops domestically and globally.”

The SCFBA submitted a comprehensive package of policy and program proposals to the U.S. Senate and House agriculture committees. Given the budget constraints facing Congress, no new programs were suggested; however, the alliance recommended refining and enhancing some existing programs that were established in the 2008 Farm Bill.

“In 2008, Congress recognized for the first time the tremendous contributions specialty crops make to U.S. agriculture and the health of all Americans. Since then, these programs have helped develop improved varieties, promote market access and ensure the safety of our products. At a time when Americans are being called on to eat more fruits and vegetables,

specialty crop producers need these resources to meet the demands of an increasingly health conscious population,” said SCFBA co-chair Mike Stuart, president of the Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association.

The specialty crop industry is also urging Congress to pass the 2012 Farm Bill before the current law expires in September. If the current Farm Bill is temporarily extended, several important specialty crop programs, including the Specialty Crop Research Initiative and the Clean Plant Network will lose funding.

“The resources made available in this bill will go far to help develop better ways to grow, distribute and safeguard nutritious food Americans need for good health,” said SCFBA co-chair Tom Nassif, president and CEO of Western Growers. “This is not just a bill for or about farmers. The resources invested contribute to a better public health policy that will positively impact and improve the way Americans eat.”

The SCFBA appreciates the leadership of Senator Michael Crapo (R-Idaho) and Senator Patty Murray (D-Wash.) in building support for the letter, which can be found [here](#).

Signatories to the letter:

Sen. Daniel Akaka, D-HI
Sen. Michael Bennet, D-CO
Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-NM
Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-CA
Sen. Scott Brown, R-MA
Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-WA
Sen. Thomas Carper, D-De
Sen. Bob Casey, D-PA
Sen. Susan Collins, R-ME
Sen. Chris Coons, D-DE
Sen. Michael Crapo, R-ID
Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-CA
Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-NY
Sen. Daniel Inouye, D-HI
Sen. John Kerry, D-MA
Sen. Frank Lautenberg, D-NJ

Sen. Carl Levin, D-MI
Sen. Joseph Lieberman, I-CT
Sen. Robert Menendez, D-NJ
Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-OR
Sen. Patty Murray, D-WA
Sen. Bill Nelson, D-FL
Sen. Jack Reed, D-RI
Sen. Jim Risch, R-ID
Sen. Bernard Sanders, I-VT
Sen. Charles Schumer, D-NY
Sen. Olympia Snowe, R-ME
Sen. Mark Udall, D-CO
Sen. Tom Udall, D-NM
Sen. Mark Warner, D-VA
Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-RI
Sen. Ron Wyden, D-OR

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The Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance is a national coalition of more than 120 organizations representing growers of fruits, vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts, nursery plants and other products. The alliance was established to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crop agriculture and improve the health of Americans by broadening the scope of U.S. agricultural public policy. For more information, visit www.strongeragriculture.org.