

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
Senate Agriculture Committee
328 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Ranking Member
Senate Agriculture Committee
328 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Roberts:

We are writing to urge you to build on the strong foundation the 2008 Farm Bill created for specialty crop producers across the country. Specialty crops represent approximately one-half of U.S. cash crop receipts and are of great significance to both farmers and consumers. It seems clear that the 2012 Farm Bill is likely to dramatically restructure federal agriculture spending. During consideration of these significant changes to spending we hope that you will actively consider both the needs of specialty crop producers and the market oriented structure of the programs that were a part of the 2008 Farm Bill.

Congress recognized the importance of specialty crops in the 2008 Farm Bill by focusing mandatory resources for specialty crop producers around key policy priorities including 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. It is clear from the successes of the 2008 Farm Bill that government investment in the competitiveness and sustainability of the U.S. specialty crop industry will produce healthy results for all of America, not just farmers.

As the Senate Agriculture Committee continues its deliberations on the 2012 Farm Bill, we urge you to continue all current investments and build on them where possible. These programs have helped drive investment and have enhanced specialty crop producers' competitiveness throughout America. Most importantly, specialty crops are a critical and growing component of U.S. agriculture, deserving of full and equal consideration as other agricultural sectors in the Farm Bill.

Sincerely,

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

