

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 15, 2005

The Honorable Robert Bennett  
Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee  
on Agriculture, Rural Development, and  
Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Herb Kohl  
Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee  
on Agriculture, Rural Development and  
Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Bennett and Ranking Member Kohl:

We are writing in support of appropriations in the FY 2006 budget for certain programs authorized by the Specialty Crop Competitiveness Act.

The Specialty Crop Competitiveness Act was designed to make U.S. specialty crop growers, who produce approximately 50% of the value of all agricultural crops in the U.S., more competitive in today's global markets. As you know, it is critical that the U.S. have a strong domestic specialty crop industry capable of producing a nutritious, yet affordable, food supply for our dietary and national security needs. In order to achieve this goal, we must invest in initiatives designed to enable our growers to remain competitive in global markets.

The Specialty Crop Competitiveness Act is of the utmost importance to growers of specialty crops and rural communities across the nation. Further, we believe the specialty crop industry plays an important role in the overall agriculture trade picture, and the programs authorized in the legislation will provide the necessary tools need for the industry to prosper.

Given the difficult challenges facing U.S. specialty crop growers today, we request your support for full funding of the following programs authorized by Public Law 108-465 in the Fiscal Year 2006 agriculture appropriations bill:

- \$44.5 million for a Specialty Crop Block Grant program;
- \$2 million in discretionary funds for the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops program (in addition to \$2 million in annual mandatory spending for TASC provided by the 2002 Farm Bill);

- \$1.5 million for maintenance at the USDA/Agriculture Marketing Service inspection training center.

These programs are of vital importance to U.S. specialty crop growers. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Rick Sutorum

Frank R. Lautenberg

Allen Saxe

Robert A. Menendez

Paul Sarbanes

Mark Wyden

Mike Crapo

Ed Cliver

Bill Nelson

Debbie Stabenow

Al Martin

Jack Reed

Tommy Franks

Bob Casey

Tim Wirth

Joe Manchin

Hillary Rodham Clinton