

December 17, 2024

Dear President Trump,

The undersigned trade associations, which collectively represent millions of hardworking American farmers, ranchers, and foresters; commodity producers, processors, users, and consumers; and state agencies, write today to congratulate you on your success in the election and to applaud your nomination of Brooke Rollins as Secretary of Agriculture. We look forward to working with your administration to strengthen America's agriculture industries including through continuation of farmer-funded and farmer-led research and promotion efforts.

Each of our associations represent an industry which plays a critical and irreplaceable role in the U.S. economy through the production of food, fiber, and other essential goods—all while creating jobs, stewarding resources, and supporting local communities across the country. These industries utilize research and promotion boards better known as "checkoff" programs. Checkoffs were established at the urging of the producers of their respective product. While each individual program operates in a manner uniquely crafted to suit the needs of that specific commodity, generally, a small portion of the sales receipts of that commodity is allocated to a research and promotion board overseen by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Research and promotion boards exist to develop new markets and strengthen existing channels for specific commodities while conducting important research and promotional activities. They also work to educate consumers on behalf of a particular commodity to expand total demand to the benefit of all producers. Using the pooled resources and stakeholder investments obtained through checkoff assessments, they promote the product as a whole to create an industry-wide benefit through increased sales, consumer awareness, and higher overall demand. For every dollar invested into a commodity checkoff, producers see several more in return.

Unfortunately, these research and promotion programs have been under constant attack by outside groups with no real connection to agriculture. These groups seek to hinder the ability of checkoff programs to function or to do away with these valuable programs all together. Thankfully, these efforts have been unsuccessful. Our collective memberships strongly support checkoff programs and see the value in their continued work.

All checkoff programs are subject to stringent oversight. Federal law prohibits the use of checkoff dollars to influence public policy or disparage another commodity. Each dollar that goes into the checkoffs is overseen by board members appointed by the secretary of agriculture. Additionally, the programs are subject to multiple reviews and audits to ensure that funds are handled in full compliance with the law. Each audit report is available to the public on USDA's website. If producers are ever unsatisfied with the work of their checkoff, they may request a petition for referendum to terminate the program.

Any effort to weaken or end research and promotion boards would set producers back decades in the work which has been done to promote our commodities and improve the businesses and livelihoods of our members. Some of the projects made possible by checkoffs have led to groundbreaking research developments such as new cuts of meat and mitigating the development of allergies. Checkoff programs have made significant, measurable strides in raising the level of demand for each of our respective products. Without these programs, demand and education outreach efforts would be adversely impacted to an immense degree.

We appreciate the administration's support for these popular, successful programs which benefit U.S agriculture and natural resource producers. Please do not hesitate to reach out to our organizations directly with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

CC: Brooke Rollins, Nominee, Secretary of Agriculture

Almond Alliance
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Mushroom Institute
American Sheep Industry Association
American Soybean Association
American Wood Council
Clean Fuels Alliance America
International Fresh Produce Association
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Christmas Tree Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Milk Producers Federation
National Pecan Federation
National Pork Producers Council
National Potato Council
National Sorghum Producers
National Watermelon Association
North American Blueberry Council
Plant Based Products Council
Southeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association
Soy Aquaculture Alliance
Soy Transportation Coalition
U.S. Peanut Federation
United Egg Producers