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Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance Applauds Farm Bill Conference Committee Agreement

Programs Supporting Specialty Crop Industry Included in Report

WASHINGTON, D.C – The [Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance](#) (SCFBA), representing over 120 specialty crop organizations across the United States, released the following statement after the Farm Bill Conference Committee submitted its conference report during the final Congressional session of 2018:

The Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance applauds the efforts of Chairman Michael Conaway, Chairman Pat Roberts, Ranking Member Collin Peterson and Ranking Member Debbie Stabenow along with the members of the Farm Bill Conference Committee in submitting a conference report for the Farm Bill.

Particularly, the Alliance is pleased to see the following included in the 2018 Farm Bill:

- Enhanced funding for the Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI), allowing all specialty crops to compete for the full \$80 million annually for the SCRI program
- An annual trust fund of \$25 million annually to maintain resources for the citrus industry for combating citrus greening
- Full \$9 million annual funding of the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC) program, which encourages reduction of bureaucratic impediments to make the program more efficient in overcoming trade barriers
- Continued support for programs that combat invasive pests and diseases at \$75 million annually, with the goal of enhancing its funding in five years by \$7.5 million to fund the National Clean Plant Network
- Increased Food Insecurity Nutrition Initiative (FINI) funding levels and continued support for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Continued strong funding of Specialty Crop Block Grants (SCBG)
- Improved access to foreign markets through increased funding for the Market Access Program (MAP) of at least \$200 million annually
- Strong language in SCRI, AFRI and the newly created AGARDA program focusing on mechanization as a priority
- Reforms to the National Organic Program (NOP) operation

The Alliance has worked diligently to ensure the Farm Bill enhances nutrition programs that promote specialty crop consumption, expands agricultural trade opportunities, fully funds pest and disease programs and strengthens research funding. It is vital for Congress to take a bipartisan approach and pass this critical legislation. The Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance urges passage in both chambers before the end of the year.

“Specialty crop producers across the nation are united in providing consumers with healthy eating options by expanding the consumption of fruits and vegetables, bolstering research and pest management and supporting grower initiatives to improve competitiveness,” said John Keeling, executive president and CEO of the National Potato Council. “For this work to continue, the Farm Bill must be passed by the end of the year.”

“This report is great news for specialty crop agriculture, but it’s even better news for consumers,” said Mike Stuart, FFVA chief executive officer. “It ensures that Americans will continue to have access to a plentiful supply of nutritious fruits and vegetables. What’s more, this continued investment in specialty crop agriculture shows that Congress understands the vital role we play in the U.S. economy and in public health. Timely passage of this bill is critical. ”

“Support of specialty crops programs in the Farm Bill demonstrate that Congress acknowledges the value of these programs and their tremendous importance to the specialty crop industry. The Alliance is grateful for their inclusion in the bill and for Congress’s continued commitment to policies that enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of specialty crop agriculture,” said Tom Nassif, president and CEO of Western Growers Association.

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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 <http://www.farmbillalliance.org>.*