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Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance Issues Statement of Principles

(Aug. 29, 2022) – The Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance (SCFBA), a national coalition of more than 200 specialty crop organizations representing growers of fruits, vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts, nursery plants and other products, has released its statement of principles for consideration of the 2023 Farm Bill.

The SCFBA was established to advocate for broad-based Farm Bill policy initiatives to address the unique needs of a diverse sector of the agricultural economy, known as specialty crops, and to address their overall competitiveness in the face of increasing imports and rising global pressures on American exports. It is led by co-chairs **Mike Joyner, president of the Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association; Dave Puglia, president and CEO of Western Growers; and Kam Quarles, CEO of the National Potato Council**, along with **Robert Guenther, chief public policy officer for International Fresh Produce Association**, who serves as secretariat for the Alliance.

The co-chairs issued the following statement alongside the release of the SCFBA statement of principles:

“This statement of principles – which focuses on health, competitiveness and sustainability, trade and foreign competition, research and innovation, and natural resources and climate – is guiding our development of the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance’s priorities for the 2023 Farm Bill. In the months ahead, specialty crop producers will continue to advocate for support under a common set of goals and intend to soon share recommendations to Congress. We continue to be encouraged by the support for our growers and look forward to working with industry leaders and policymakers to encourage access to broader resources for the specialty crop industry.”

Specialty crop production, including fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, nursery and greenhouse commodities, contributes significantly to the U.S economy, [accounting for \\$64.7 billion in farm gate value and 30 percent of farm cash receipts for crops.](#)

The Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance Statement of Principles for Consideration of the 2023 Farm Bill:

Healthy Americans. Investments in the competitiveness and sustainability of the U.S. specialty crop industry will produce a strong return for all Americans, not just farmers. Expanding access and availability to safe, wholesome, healthy, and affordable foods, as well as trees, flowers, and plants, will encourage life-long healthy eating habits, mental and physical well-being, and help address national priorities such as obesity, heart disease, and food and nutrition insecurity.

Competitiveness and Sustainability. In recognition of its significance to American agriculture, the American food supply, and the communities it supports across the United States, a proportional share of farm bill resources and mandatory spending should be allocated to specialty crop priorities. To foster a better understanding of the specialty crop industry in the United States, Congress and USDA should invest in the human resources, expertise, and data collection and analytics necessary throughout the government to better serve this diverse and vital agricultural sector and its supply chains.

Trade and Foreign Competition. Preserving the critical supply chain for domestically sourced healthy foods in the United States should be a national priority. Establishing a competitive playing field for American specialty crop producers includes assisting American producers with unfair foreign competition, promoting American specialty crops in foreign markets, and eliminating trade barriers that discriminate against American specialty crop exports.

Research and Innovation. Scientific breakthroughs, technological innovation and data-enabled decision making will continue to drive long-term sustainability and profitability of the specialty crop industry as it adapts to labor, climate and environmental challenges, pests and diseases, rising global competitiveness, shifting consumer preferences, supply chain disruptions, and other challenges. A sustained federal investment into research and innovation must be of meaningful scale to catalyze opportunities for the industry, alleviate existing challenges, and propel U.S. specialty crop industry to a new level of global competitiveness.

Natural Resources and Climate. The production methods and structure of certain specialty crop producers has historically inhibited their ability to participate in many USDA conservation programs. Recognizing the diverse nature and unique challenges involved in specialty crop production, enhance the ability of specialty crop producers to participate fully in all USDA conservation programs as well as any initiatives to address global climate change.

The release of the statement of principles follows a July statement and letter to the leadership of the Senate and House Agriculture Committees officially opposing any attempt to expand the definition of specialty crops beyond the commonly understood meaning set forth in the Specialty Crop Competitiveness Act of 2004 or to direct specialty crop funds to non-specialty crops, including natural stone, wild rice, and hemp. The Alliance is planning to release its full set of Farm Bill recommendations this fall.

SCFBA

*The **Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance** is a national coalition of more than 200 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 <https://farmbillalliance.com/>.*