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SCFBA Seeks Expansion of MASC Program After Specialty Crops Excluded from Year-End Economic Aid Package

Group requests Congressional support for a \$3 billion additional investment in USDA's Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops program

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Dec. 18, 2024) – In a letter issued to the leaders of the U.S. House and U.S. Senate Agriculture Committees, the Co-Chairs of the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance (SCFBA) expressed their disappointment that specialty crop production – which represents nearly half the farm gate value of American agriculture – is left out of the final year-end economic assistance package negotiated by Congressional leaders.

In the letter, the group writes:

“Shortly after the FARM Act was introduced in the House of Representatives in October, the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance put together a proposed structure for economic aid for our industry. We shared this proposal with the agriculture and appropriations committees in the House and Senate and requested that if Congress were to advance an economic assistance package for agriculture that it be inclusive of specialty crops.

Subsequently, in recognition of the severe and unique challenges confronting specialty crop growers in the United States, the Department of Agriculture announced the new Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops (MASC) program. This \$2 billion in economic assistance that is being provided through MASC is an important downpayment for our growers, and except for the structure of the payment limits, it is substantially similar to what the Alliance proposed in October. We are grateful to the Department for recognizing this immediate need and for taking this important first step, however, more is required.

The Alliance has been communicating with your staffs throughout the year-end negotiations, advocating that Congress include economic assistance for specialty crops in the form of additional funding for MASC along with adjustments to the program's payment limits. It is now clear that this request has been left out of the final package negotiated by Congressional leaders.”

The group proposes a path forward to assist specialty crop growers by requesting support for an additional \$3 billion in funding for MASC and changes to the program's payment limitations.

“Specialty crops include nutrient dense fruits, vegetables and tree nuts, which should make up more than half of an American's diet according to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. It is imperative that specialty crop growers in the United States receive economic aid similar to that which Congress is providing to row crops, which include payment limits twice the level of those announced for specialty crops in MASC. Accordingly,

we are requesting that each of you support our request to the Department of Agriculture for an additional \$3 billion in funding from the Commodity Credit Corporation for the MASC program and that it adopt the payment limits used for CFAP-2, including the three-entity multiplier.”

The Alliance concludes by reiterating the need for Congress to provide certainty to specialty crop growers by passing a bipartisan five-year Farm Bill, rather than an extension, which delays much-needed investments for the industry.

“The Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance has been advocating for new and innovative long-term investments in the Farm Bill to help our growers compete in an increasingly challenging marketplace. These proposals, which include innovative new programs for research, risk management, technological advancement, and trade, have been receiving widespread bipartisan support from both Houses of Congress. Another extension of the 2018 Farm Bill disproportionately affects specialty crop growers by further delaying these investments in an industry that is vital to the health and wellbeing of all Americans.”

The full letter is available [here](#).

SCFBA is a national coalition of more than 200 specialty crop organizations representing growers of fruits, vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts, nursery plants and other products. In early 2023, the alliance released a set of key policy priorities as part of its [Farm Bill recommendations](#). 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 SCFBA is co-chaired by **Cathy Burns, CEO of the International Fresh Produce Association; 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.**

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 farmbillalliance.com.