



HOUSE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

FARM BILL: SPECIALTY CROPS

Specialty crops play an important role in the success of U.S. agriculture and are an essential part of healthy diets. Diversity among the crops—ranging from fruits and vegetables to tree nuts, nursery crops, and floriculture—makes the task of developing the specialty crop safety net particularly challenging. Despite those challenges, significant investments have positively impacted our specialty crop producers.

SPECIALTY CROP RESEARCH INITIATIVE (SCRI)

The Specialty Crop Research Initiative provides resources for research and extension projects specifically for specialty crop farmers. The farm bill provides \$80 million per year and refines priorities to better serve specialty crop farmers.

CITRUS DISEASE RESEARCH

Citrus greening remains a serious threat to domestic citrus production. Despite significant federal, state and farmer investment, there is currently no known cure for an infected tree. The disease continues to spread to citrus trees in Florida, Texas, Arizona, and California. Florida's crop reports indicate that citrus greening has been the primary cause of a 60% decrease in citrus production over the past 10 years. USDA's most recent economic estimates place the 2017 citrus crop yield at 81 million boxes, compared to 204 million boxes in 2007.

This farm bill provides \$25 million per year for the citrus research and extension program within SCRI, reauthorizes the citrus disease subcommittee of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board, and, in accordance with the industry's request, adds two committee seats for California/Arizona stakeholders.

SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANTS PROGRAM

The farm bill provides \$85 million per year for Specialty Crop Block Grants, and clarifies performance evaluation language to ensure that the federal bureaucracy does not unnecessarily interfere with project implementation at the state level.

PLANT PEST & DISEASE MANAGEMENT & NATIONAL CLEAN PLAN NETWORK

The farm bill maintains the Plant Pest and Disease Management program and the National Clean Plant Network. The program will continue to have \$75 million per year in funding.

MECHANIZATION

Specialty crops are very labor-intensive and the availability of a stable workforce has long been one of the greatest challenges facing growers. Research to promote development of mechanization and automation of labor-intensive tasks on farms and in packing facilities remains a top priority for the specialty crop industry. The farm bill makes changes to priority language within two important agricultural research and extension programs: SCRI and the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). This prioritization will help ensure that proposals addressing these cutting-edge technologies will be considered for funding.



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MARKET DEVELOPMENT

The farm bill streamlines existing authorities for the Market Access Program (MAP), the Foreign Market Development (FMD) Program, the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC) program, and the Emerging Markets Program (EMP) under one International Market Development Program, restoring funding for FMD and TASC, and establishing overall funding at \$255 million per year moving forward.

NUTRITION

The farm bill provides \$275 million for the Gus Shumacher Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) program. It includes several commonsense policy reforms including allowing the secretary to prioritize year-round access to FINI-eligible fruits and vegetables and also establishes an evaluation, training, and technical assistance center for best practices. The bill also establishes the retailer-funded incentive pilot, which allows retailers to offer incentives for the purchase of minimally processed fruits and vegetables, and provides \$600 million for retailer reimbursements. The fruit and vegetable school lunch program is also reauthorized.

CROP INSURANCE

The safety net provided by Federal crop insurance is vital to specialty crop producers. This farm bill builds upon efforts to expand crop insurance options for specialty crop and organic producers. Individual policies are available for hundreds of different commodities. Additionally, Whole Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) is available to insure revenue from virtually all crops and livestock, and it is now the fifth largest insurance product – covering almost \$3 billion in liability in 2017.

OTHER

- Farms are exempted from compliance with the Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS).
- The Value-Added Producer Grant Program is reauthorized.
- This farm bill ensures the 508(h) process is a viable option to bring new products into the crop insurance market and emphasizes research and development for underserved commodities, including specialty crops.