

March 16, 2018

The Honorable Mike Conaway
Chairman
House Agriculture Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member
House Agriculture Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Conaway and Ranking Member Peterson,

The undersigned organizations are participants in the valuable Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC) program. As you are aware, TASC has been in operation for over fifteen years and was created to address sanitary and phytosanitary issues and technical barriers to trade that prohibit or threaten exports of U.S. specialty crops.

During just the past three years, TASC has assisted in overcoming export barriers for specialty crop commodities and projects in Alaska, California, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Hawaii, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, South Carolina, New York, Oregon, Washington and Wisconsin. Some of the commodities recently participating in this competitive grant program include: almonds, apples, apricots, blueberries, cherries, citrus, cranberries, hops, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums, potatoes, raspberries, seed, strawberries and wine.

We understand that a newly-enforced budget rule has determined that TASC no longer is embedded within the Farm Bill's baseline. This new ruling effectively means that TASC will cease operation on October 1st if new funds cannot be found in an extension of or a successor to the current 2014 Farm Bill.

The urgent market access issues that TASC has resolved fully justify its continuation at the relatively-modest funding level of \$9 million annually. Without the public-private partnership provided by TASC, recent specialty crop exports to Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Chile, China, the Dominican Republic, the European Union, India, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Philippines, South African, Central/South America, South Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam would still be impaired by SPS or TBT issues.

We respectfully request that you provide full resources to maintain TASC beyond September 30th, 2018. Thank you for your interest in maintaining this vital program.

Sincerely,

American Seed Trade Association
California Cherry Export Association
California Citrus Mutual
California Date Commission
California Dried Fruit Coalition
California Dried Plum Board
California Fig Advisory Board
California Fresh Fruit Association

California Pear Growers
California Strawberry Commission
California Table Grape Commission
Cherry Marketing Institute
Colorado Potato Administrative Committee
Cranberry Institute
Empire State Potato Growers
Florida Strawberry Growers Association
Hop Growers of America
Hop Growers of Washington
Idaho Grower Shippers Association
Idaho Hop Growers Association
Idaho Potato Commission
Maine Potato Board
Minnesota Area II Potato Council
National Peach Council
National Potato Council
North American Blueberry Council
Northern Plains Potato Growers Association
Northwest Horticultural Council
Oregon Hop Growers Association
Oregon Potato Commission
Potato Growers of Michigan
South Carolina Peach Council
Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance
Texas Citrus Mutual
Texas International Produce Association
United Fresh Produce Association
U.S. Apple Association
U.S. Hop Industry Plant Protection Committee
U.S. Sweet Potato Council
Washington State Potato Commission
Washington Red Raspberry Commission
Western Growers Association
Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine
Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association
WineAmerica
Wine Institute

