

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 2, 2012

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
Senate Agriculture Committee
328 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Ranking Member
Senate Agriculture Committee
328 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

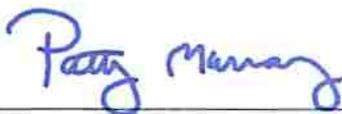
Dear Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Roberts:

We are writing to urge you to build on the strong foundation the 2008 Farm Bill created for specialty crop producers across the country. Specialty crops represent approximately one-half of U.S. cash crop receipts and are of great significance to both farmers and consumers. It seems clear that the 2012 Farm Bill is likely to dramatically restructure federal agriculture spending. During consideration of these significant changes to spending we hope that you will actively consider both the needs of specialty crop producers and the market oriented structure of the programs that were a part of the 2008 Farm Bill.

Congress recognized the importance of specialty crops in the 2008 Farm Bill by focusing mandatory resources for specialty crop producers around key policy priorities including research, invasive pest and disease mitigation, foreign market development, nutrition, and targeted state-level funding for local initiatives. This translated into job creation, trade expansion, infrastructure investment for capacity building, targeted research for new innovations and technology, and increased access for fruits and vegetables in federal nutrition programs. It is clear from the successes of the 2008 Farm Bill that government investment in the competitiveness and sustainability of the U.S. specialty crop industry will produce healthy results for all of America, not just farmers.

As the Senate Agriculture Committee continues its deliberations on the 2012 Farm Bill, we urge you to continue all current investments and build on them where possible. These programs have helped drive investment and have enhanced specialty crop producers' competitiveness throughout America. Most importantly, specialty crops are a critical and growing component of U.S. agriculture, deserving of full and equal consideration as other agricultural sectors in the Farm Bill.

Sincerely,



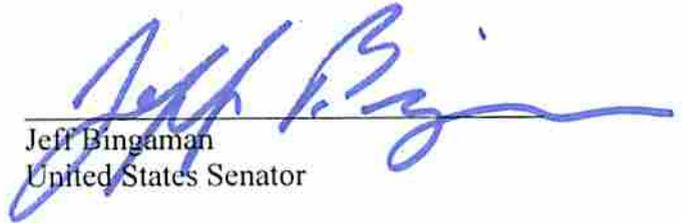
Patty Murray
United States Senator



Mike Crapo
United States Senator



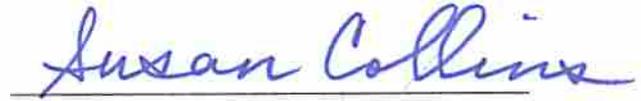
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



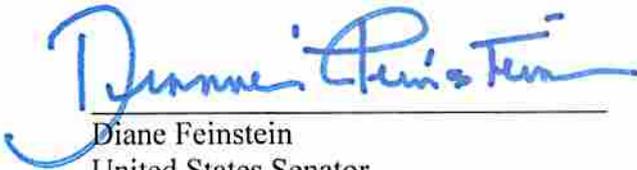
Jeff Bingaman
United States Senator



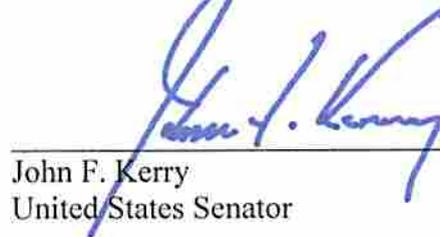
Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Diane Feinstein
United States Senator



John F. Kerry
United States Senator



Daniel K. Inouye
United States Senator



Carl Levin
United States Senator



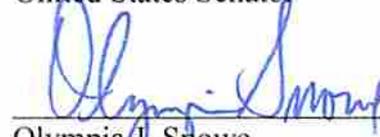
Joseph I. Lieberman
United States Senator



Jeff Merkley
United States Senator



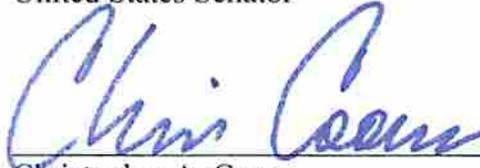
James E. Risch
United States Senator



Olympia J. Snowe
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator


Frank R. Lautenberg
United States Senator


Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator

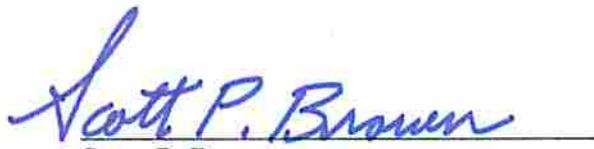

Bill Nelson
United States Senator


Charles E. Schumer
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Mark Udall
United States Senator


Robert P. Casey Jr.
United States Senator

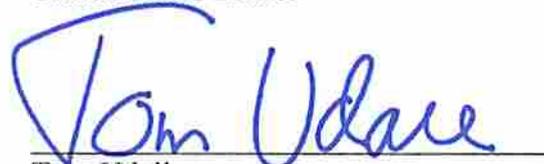

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator


Scott P. Brown
United States Senator

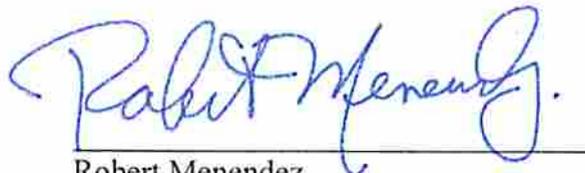

Mark R. Warner
United States Senator


Bernard Sanders
United States Senate


Daniel K. Akaka
United States Senator


Tom Udall
United States Senator


Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator


Robert Menendez
United States Senator