

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 1, 2024

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

We write to respectfully urge you to approve the Secretarial Disaster Designation requested on November 13, 2023, by Washington Governor Jay Inslee for sweet cherry production in the state of Washington. Fresh sweet cherries are a top agricultural commodity in Washington with a value over \$1 billion. The weather-driven economic loss from the 2023 sweet cherry season impacts Washington state's economy and has left growers in need of federal assistance to continue operations into the 2024 season.

A cold spring with an abrupt transition to unseasonable, sustained temperatures of 90 degrees Fahrenheit or higher in early April resulted in a compressed bloom period in the Pacific Northwest, while heavy rains and cold weather delayed California's season. This meant that instead of the sweet cherry harvest beginning in California and ending in the state of Washington, sweet cherries were harvested at the same time throughout the Pacific Northwest and California. A normal west coast cherry harvest spans 120 days. In 2023, 70 percent of the crop matured in 30 days between June 20 and July 20. Pacific Northwest growers suffered significant economic losses and were forced to leave as much as 35 percent of the crop unharvested due to this weather-driven disaster. We understand data provided to USDA indicates growers experienced losses of more than 50 percent.

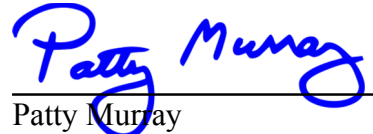
The 2023 season has harmed sweet cherry growers in Washington state and it has negatively impacted our state's agricultural economy. On behalf of the growers in the state of Washington, we request an expedited review and subsequent USDA Secretarial Disaster Designation for the Central and Eastern Washington counties so growers can access critical federal assistance and continue to grow and harvest sweet cherries in the upcoming 2024 season.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter.

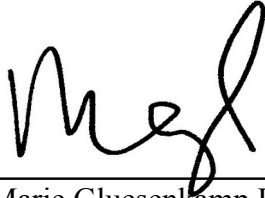
Sincerely,



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



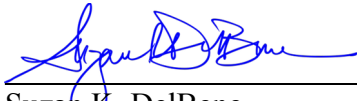
Patty Murray
United States Senator



Marie Gluesenkamp Perez
Member of Congress



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress



Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress



Adam Smith
Member of Congress



Kim Schrier, M.D.
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