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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

April 14, 2008

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Chairman
House Agriculture Committee
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Ranking Member
House Agriculture Committee
1305 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Committee on Agriculture
Nutrition, and Forestry
328A Senate Russell Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
328A Senate Russell Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairmen Peterson and Harkin and Ranking Members Goodlatte and Chambliss:

As you proceed to conference on the reauthorization of the Farm Bill, I ask that you consider a number of provisions that are vitally important to Central Washington, including sufficient funding authorizations for agriculture research, the Specialty Crop Block Grant program, and the Market Access Program (MAP). I also request that you include \$15 million authorized for the Asparagus Market Loss Program. Lastly, I ask that you do not include any provisions in the Farm Bill that increase taxes.

Agriculture is the backbone of Central Washington's economy. Our region produces everything from apples and cherries, to potatoes and hops. These growers consistently grow high quality, nutritious products without the support of the subsidies that other commodities enjoy. Instead, they depend on research to remain competitive in the global marketplace.

Research done at universities and Agriculture Research Service (ARS) centers, like those in Prosser, Wenatchee, and Wapato, provide our growers with the tools they need to continue to do business. These tools include everything from a new method for storing apples for a longer period of time to disease-free stock for fruit trees and vines. Research also allows for the development of new varieties of wheat that are resistant to ever-evolving diseases, and increases the nutritional value of potatoes. With such vital contributions to our domestic food production, we must increase funding for the Research Title of the Farm Bill. It is essential to the continuation of the U.S. agriculture industry

that the federal government provides the necessary resources to allow existing research to continue and new research to be developed to address additional challenges that arise.

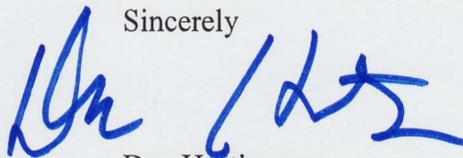
I also encourage you to include additional funding to the Market Access Program. As you know, in the global economy that we live in, the success of our agriculture community depends on expanding access to export markets. MAP has been very successful in this task, and its success was recognized in the last Farm Bill when the amount allocated to MAP was doubled. This important program should continue to be expanded, and I strongly encourage you to authorize at least \$225 million for MAP in fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

I am pleased that both the House and Senate versions of the Farm Bill include additional funds for the Specialty Crops Block Grant program. It is past time for Congress to recognize the value of these crops. This program provides much-needed support to agriculture growers that ask for little federal assistance, and the provisions expanding Specialty Crops Block Grants must be included in the final Farm Bill Reauthorization.

Lastly, I ask that you include the \$15 million authorization for the Asparagus Market Loss Program that was included in the Senate version. As you may be aware, the U.S. asparagus industry has been all but destroyed by a provision in the Andean Trade Preferences Act (ATPA) that provides Peruvian asparagus growers duty-free access to U.S. markets. Asparagus acreage has plummeted by almost 50 percent since the ATPA passed, and farmers have been forced to sell their products at below the cost of production in three of the last five years. The funding authorized in the Senate version is critical to the survival of the U.S. asparagus industry.

I recognize that difficult choices must be made as you develop the final conference report. However, you must consider the profound impact these programs have on farmers in Central Washington and nationwide during this conference.

Sincerely



Doc Hastings
Member of Congress

cc: Members of the 2008 Farm Bill Conference Committee