

SPECIALTY CROP FARM BILL FUNDING

Today's apple industry is faced with skyrocketing fuel costs, a significant produce trade deficit, ever-increasing regulations and the constant threat of labor shortages. The U.S. apple industry believes federal agricultural policy should encourage competitiveness through private investment, opportunities to increase profitability in the marketplace, and incentives to growers who are committed to better serving consumer needs. Without appropriate federal policy, U.S. production will relocate to foreign growing areas with far fewer regulations, abundant labor, and lower production costs.

This market-oriented philosophy is reflected in the specialty crop provisions in the 2008 Farm Bill. USApple and other members of the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance appreciate the efforts of those in Congress who supported mandatory funding for specialty crop programs.

President Obama's proposed budget included a 20 percent cut to the Market Access Program (MAP). **USApple strongly opposes cuts to the MAP program or other specialty crop programs in the Farm Bill Including:**

- **Research** – Continued funding for the Specialty Crop Research Initiative which is funding important apple priorities, including fruit thinning, codling moth, and automation technology.
- **International Trade** – Full funding for the MAP program and the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crop (TASC). These programs are key to leveling the playing field in the export market where the apple industry competes with lower cost producers.
- **State Block Grants** – Specialty Crop Block Grants which are targeted to local needs and can be used on variety of priorities including marketing, food safety and nutrition initiatives.
- **Nutrition Programs** – Expansion of the Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program to all 50 states, increased USDA commodity purchases and innovative programs like the fresh sliced apple pilot.
- **Plant Pest & Disease Prevention** – The prevention of plant pests and diseases is critical for the future health of the apple industry.
- **Clean Plant Network** – Establishment of a network of clean plant centers to ensure nurseries can continue to provide safe virus-free plant materials to orchards, vineyards and other growers.
- **Disaster Assistance** – Mandatory funding for the Tree Assistance Program (TAP) and permanent disaster program are critical safety nets for apple and other growers hit by severe weather.

Position

USApple strongly believes that specialty crop programs must be funded at the levels outlined and agreed to under the Farm Bill. Implementation must be done in a prompt and appropriate manner.