

Apple producers and processors are integral to America's specialty crop industry, contributing significantly to our national economy and supplying food products critical to a healthy diet. Research and extension activities supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provide our apple industry, and other specialty crops, with a competitive edge in the global marketplace by enabling introduction of new cultivars, implementation of safer pest management strategies, development of more sustainable production practices, and science-based improvement of food safety. In the last Farm Bill, specialty crop organizations developed industry-specific initiatives strategically targeting limited resources to address critical research and extension needs. This approach has already demonstrated positive results that will enable specialty crop industries to produce and process their crops more efficiently and sustainably, and provide consumers with a nutritious, safe, secure, and affordable food supply. Key USDA programs supported by USApple's Research Subcommittee include:

- ***USDA-Geneva Apple Rootstock Breeding*** – recently increased funding is appreciated, but continued investment is essential to enhance propagation, evaluation and commercialization of new rootstock selections. Activities are underway in IA, ID, MA, MD, ME, MI, NJ, NY, OH, OR, PA, VA, WV, and WA.
 - Nearly a dozen new rootstock selections from the program are close to full release. Continued funding will expedite production of the selections in quantities sufficient for rapid commercial distribution.
 - New rootstock selections carry such critical traits as pest and disease resistance, increased productivity, stress tolerance, and adaptation to local growing conditions.
- ***The National Clean Plant Network (NCPN)*** – USApple strongly supported creation of the NCPN and seeks its continued funding through the period of the current and next Farm Bill.
 - Our country's tree fruit and grape producers and nursery industries rely on the NCPN as the single nationally-certified source of plant material free of potentially devastating virus diseases.
 - Research in these perennial crops requires a sustained investment to ensure development and deployment of stringent diagnostic procedures to ensure phytosanitary security.
- ***The Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI)*** – The SCRI, originated in the 2008 Farm Bill, has supported collaborative projects already impacting specialty crops, including the apple industry. Specific projects with multi-state and multi-institutional teams include:
 - Developing new Integrated Pest Management practices to enhance workplace safety and reduce environmental impact (CA, MI, OR, UT, WA).
 - Applying modern genomics and genetic technologies to create apple cultivars with consumer-preferred traits (AR, CA, FL, MI, MN, NY, TX, SC, WA).
 - Adapting engineering and automation technologies to improve the safety, efficiency, and sustainability of apple and peach orchards (CA, IN, OR, PA, WA).

Position: USApple urges full funding for the above USDA administered programs to continue to strengthen its research foundation to assure that the U.S. apple industry improves its genetic and technological edge, both so essential to maintaining a competitive position in the global marketplace.

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