



News Release

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Contact: Amy Philpott, aphilpott@unitedfresh.org
202 303 3400 ext. 425

United Fresh Supports Specialty Crops Competition Act of 2007

Bipartisan Legislation is A Critical Step to Achieving a More Equitable Farm Bill Policy

Washington, D.C. - United Fresh Produce Association endorsed the *Specialty Crops Competition Act of 2007*, which was introduced this morning by U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and Senator Larry Craig (R-ID) and supported by numerous co-sponsors from both parties.

"This bill is a comprehensive specialty crop farm bill package that provides the necessary framework to enhance the competitiveness of the industry and increase consumer consumption of fruits and vegetables," said Robert Guenther, senior vice-president of public policy at United Fresh. Guenther applauded the authors' legislative efforts "to introduce a farm bill policy that works toward ensuring the future prosperity and profitability of the specialty crop industry."

According to U.S. Department of Agriculture data, specialty crops represent more than \$50 billion in farm-gate value and account for more than 45 percent of farm-gate crop receipts. Specialty crop producers do not receive, nor favor, a direct payment program for themselves, yet the industry faces significant challenges. Therefore, it is imperative that agricultural policy gives the same amount of attention to the specialty crop industry as to other agricultural sectors that do receive direct payments. "By establishing Farm Bill provisions that address the priorities of both specialty crops and program crops, our farm policy will be more equitable for all of agriculture," stated Guenther.

United Fresh, in its role as secretariat of The Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance (SCFBA), helped develop a series of farm bill priorities included the *Specialty Crops Competition Act*. The SCFBA is a national coalition of more than 100 specialty crop grower organizations that has also endorsed this bill as a proactive step for ensuring that specialty crop policy priorities are included in the 2007 Farm Bill.

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Some of the major provisions in the *Specialty Crops Competition Act of 2007* are:

- **Competitiveness:** Increases access to valuable export markets by increasing the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops program, supporting the Market Access Program, supporting the State Block Grant Program, and by raising the profile for specialty crops within USDA, USTR, and other key federal agencies.
- **Nutrition:** Expands the USDA Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program in schools nationwide and develops nutrition programs that benefit consumers and assist producers by enhancing their markets.
- **Research:** Increases investment in research priorities for specialty crops, through the National Research Initiative, Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service, and the Agriculture Research Service.
- **Invasive Pests and Diseases:** Increases funding, enhances resources, and expands programs to assist in the prevention, detection, and eradication of invasive plant pests and diseases.

The bill will now be referred to the Senate Agricultural Committee for further review. It is expected that the bill will be a significant reference in the upcoming and widely anticipated 2007 Farm Bill debate.

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United Fresh Produce Association is a leading industry trade association committed to driving the growth and success of produce companies and their partners. United Fresh represents the interests of member companies throughout the global, fresh produce supply chain, including family-owned, private and publicly traded businesses as well as regional, national and international companies. The association was founded in 1904 to represent the produce industry, and recently took the name United Fresh as a result of the 2006 merger of the United Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Association and the International Fresh-cut Produce Association.