SAF asks Congress to take early action this year to pass a new Farm Bill including specific provisions benefiting the specialty crop industry.

Specialty crops, including floriculture and nursery, fruit and vegetable crops, grapes, potatoes and many others, make up more than half of U.S. cash crop value. Floral and nursery crops account for over a third of the total specialty crop value.

Specialty crops face significant challenges ranging from pests and diseases to increased international competition to needed research. However, until 2008, they received relatively little consideration in U.S. farm bill programs. That changed when, for the first time, the 2008 Farm Bill recognized the importance of specialty crops.

The 2008 law expires in September and Congress must act soon. The Senate passed a new, bipartisan bill last year. The House Agriculture Committee also passed its bipartisan version. However, the House did not bring the bill to a floor vote.

SAF, as a member of the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance, supports all of the programs benefiting specialty crops that were included in the 2008 bill, and improved by the 2012 House and Senate bills.

Of particular interest to floriculture are the following USDA programs:

- **Funding to the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)** for research and other programs to help identify and prevent new pest and disease threats to U.S. agriculture and the environment. Research on diseases of floral and nursery crops, including diseases and new insect invaders is vitally important to the health and continued international competitiveness of the industry, as well as to our environment. Funding for the National Clean Plant Network, which helps bring clean production stock to commercial growers, is also of key importance.

- **Funding for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program**, divided among the states for programs that specifically enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops in each state.

- **Funding for the Specialty Crop Research Initiative**, which helps match other funding for multi-state research specifically impacting specialty crops.

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