

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 18, 2024

The Honorable Shalanda Young  
Director  
Office of Management and Budget  
725 17<sup>th</sup> Street NW  
Washington, DC 20503

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Director Young and Secretary Vilsack,

Given ongoing market conditions that continue to stress domestic specialty crop growers, we urge you to expand the Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops (MASC) program to provide additional funding of at least \$1 billion.

We applaud the use of your authorities with regard to the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) Charter Act to provide financial assistance to specialty crop producers through this new program. From cherries and asparagus to apples, blueberries, and pecans, we know that specialty crop growers of every size, and from every region of the country, have struggled with import pressures, natural disasters, and rising costs.

The MASC program is essential to offset specialty crop growers' higher marketing costs related to perishability, packaging, transportation, and labor. As acknowledged in your Department's own Notice of Funding Availability, specialty crop producers face labor costs that are 45 percent of their total variable costs with limited ability to pass along these costs.

These ever-increasing costs, partnered with lower cash receipts, threaten our ability to keep American grown fruits and vegetables on our plates. In order to bring family farms into the next generation, we believe this additional assistance is necessary, especially as we wrap up another year without being able to pass a farm bill with more permanent resources.

In the face of economic disaster, it is imperative that funding for the MASC program is increased to support the specialty crop producers that work tirelessly to shore up the nation's healthy and sustainable food supply.

Sincerely,



Debbie Stabenow  
Chair  
Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition, and Forestry



David Scott  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Agriculture