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**Statement of the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance
On the Definition of Specialty Crops
July 2022**

The Specialty Crop Competitiveness Act of 2004 defines specialty crop as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and nursery crops (including floriculture). The SCFBA opposes any attempt to expand the definition of specialty crops beyond the commonly understood meaning set forth in the 2004 Act.

Background

The Specialty Crop Competitiveness Act of 2004 established new programs at USDA to meet the unique needs of specialty crops in critical areas such as research, trade, and regional market development and expansion. Subsequent farm bills have continued to improve and refine these programs to meet the unique needs of specialty crops, such as in 2008 when Congress allocated mandatory funding for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, included the first-ever farm bill title dedicated to horticulture, and established a new pest and disease program; again in 2014 when Congress fully funded the Specialty Crop Research Initiative and allocated additional resources to specialty crop programs; and most recently in 2018 when Congress created the AGARDA advanced research program, expanded permanent baseline funding for the Specialty Crop Research Initiative, and modernized the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops international trade program. These initiatives are chronically underfunded and oversubscribed.

The Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance was formed in 2006 to advocate for broad-based Farm Bill policy initiatives to address the unique needs of a diverse sector of the agricultural economy, known as specialty crops, and to address their overall competitiveness in the face of increasing imports and rising global pressures on American exports. It is a coalition of more than 200 organizations representing the entirety of the fruit, vegetable, tree nut, and horticulture industries in the United States. The SCFBA is actively working on recommendations to Congress for the 2023 Farm Bill across all 12 titles to make the highest and best use of the resources Congress allocates to benefit the specialty crop industry.

The Steering Committee of the SCFBA met on May 12, 2022, in Washington, DC, to further the development of its 2023 Farm Bill recommendations to Congress. Although the SCFBA's recommendations are not expected to be finalized until late summer/early fall of 2022, the Steering Committee determined there was sufficient need to establish a clear policy position now on the issue of whether to expand the definition of what it means to be a specialty crop and thereby eligible to participate in Farm Bill programs established by Congress for specialty crops. Recent proposals to expand the definition of specialty crops include shellfish, hemp, decorative stone, and niche grains like wild rice.