



Dear Senator Stabenow:

As you know, Congress will soon begin deliberations on the 2012 Farm Bill. As you move forward with debate on this measure, please keep in mind the significant progress made in the 2008 Farm Bill on policy affecting specialty crops. As a member of the specialty crop industry, I urge you to maintain and where possible, build on the progress made in creating opportunities and enhancing the competitiveness of specialty crop providers.

The 2008 Farm Bill was a landmark in how the federal government addresses the crops that account for nearly half the total farm gate value in this country and made significant strides in promoting the competitiveness of crops that directly contribute to the improved health and well-being of all Americans. In that measure, Congress focused mandatory resources on critical specialty crop policy priorities such as research, invasive pest and disease mitigation, foreign market development, nutrition and funding to enhance producers' ability to meet consumers' needs. Such investments translate into job creation, trade expansion, research and innovation, as well as increased access to fruits and vegetables through federal nutrition programs. These benefits are passed on to all Americans, not just farmers.

As you and your colleagues in Congress craft the 2012 Farm Bill, it is critical to maintain the historic specialty crop program achievements of, and maintain the momentum begun by, the 2008 Farm Bill. Such an effort would be a wise allocation of taxpayer dollars and would enhance the ability of the specialty crop industry to provide all Americans with an abundant supply of fruits, vegetables and other specialty crops. Your support for these programs is needed and would be appreciated.

Respectfully,

Board of Directors, Michigan Wine Producers Association

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