



AmericanHort

WORKING FOR HORTICULTURE

## ABOUT US

AmericanHort unites the horticultural industry and represents professionals from all facets of the industry.

From growers to retailers, breeders to installers, suppliers to innovators, students to researchers, and everyone in between, people and businesses across the horticulture industry call AmericanHort their inspiration, voice, community, business partner, leader, and advocate.

With farm gate crop value of roughly \$17 billion, total industry economic output of \$348 billion, and directly supporting 2.32 million full- and part-time jobs, the horticulture industry is a key player in the American economy.

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## Farm Bill

The five-year Farm Bill is set to expire on October 1, 2025. The Titles Related to Horticulture, Research, Rural Development, Crop Insurance, and trade in the Farm Bill are instrumental in our industry's success. AmericanHort, along with the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance (SCFBA), urges Congress to pass a bipartisan five-year Farm Bill to provide much-needed support to our growers, retailers, suppliers, researchers, partners, and customers.

### WHAT WE SEEK

We urge USDA to adopt the Specialty Crop Competitiveness Act of 2024 definition of specialty crops as the standard across all programs to ensure clarity and consistency.

#### **Establish a comprehensive safety net for specialty crop growers in the form of affordable and effective crop insurance:**

- Congress should work with USDA to expand crop insurance options for the entire horticulture industry, including nursery, greenhouse, and landscape operations. Many specialty crop growers lack access to affordable and effective coverage. To address this, Congress should create a Specialty Crop Advisory Committee to guide improvements. Reforms are needed to include more flexible policy development, improved data utilization, updates to Whole Farm Revenue Protection, expanded prevented planting coverage, targeted risk research, and enhanced outreach to growers.

#### **Tree Assistance Program (TAP) Improvements:**

- Enhance Flexibility: Extend rehabilitation timelines, allow replanting of non-viable but living trees, and permit updates for higher-density plantings to help growers recover and modernize after disasters.

#### **Consistency and predictability for specialty crop growers receiving ad hoc economic assistance from USDA:**

- Congress should establish a permanent program, like the MASC program, as a mechanism for delivering direct economic assistance to specialty crop growers.

#### **Agriculture Trade and Food Assistance Program:**

- U.S. specialty crop growers face higher labor and compliance costs than many foreign competitors. To stay competitive and support domestic food production, Farm Bill programs should invest in market development, research, and technology. We urge Congress to fund the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC) program and support efforts to boost specialty crop export competitiveness.

#### **Invest in research, technology, and innovation:**

- Support the Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI): Reinstate the Secretary's ability to waive matching fund requirements and prioritize research in areas like automation, pest detection, crop improvement, and post-harvest handling.

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- Dedicate \$40 million annually within SCRI for labor-saving mechanization and automation, with unused funds returning to general SCRI use.
- Provide stable funding for the IR-4 Program to support critical crop protection research for specialty crops.

**To support the specialty crop sector, Congress should set aside an increase of at least \$5 million per year in the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) for multi-state projects with broad industry benefits.**

- The 2018 Farm Bill permanently authorized \$85 million per year in mandatory funding for the SCBGP.
- Congress should also reaffirm USDA's ability to promote U.S. specialty crops and direct the agency to use programs like SCBGP and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to help growers adopt automation and mechanization tools that lower labor costs but remain expensive and underused.