

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:  
APPROPRIATIONS  
COMMERCE  
HEALTH, EDUCATION,  
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

April 15, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated economic disruption has created great challenges for the cranberry industry. I urge you to consider the impact and magnitude of these disruptions as you allocate the \$9.5 billion made available to support agriculture, including specialty crops, in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Specifically, I ask you to use these funds to provide direct financial assistance to cranberry growers and use Section 32 authority to make purchases of surplus cranberry products, including juice. As the impact of this emergency continues to unfold in the coming months, I urge you to utilize all available programs and authorities at USDA to enable growers to weather these challenges.

Affecting cranberry growers from coast-to-coast, the sudden and unpredictable closure of food-service businesses combined with government-issued stay-at-home orders have heightened the stress of an already challenging business environment. The growing season is now upon us, and some seasonal farm workers that cranberry growers rely on were unable to return to cranberry marshes due to travel restrictions. Many growers would like to immediately hire unemployed members of their community to replace them, but they do not have sufficient funds immediately available to do so. Small growers are especially hard hit because many of these families have unexpectedly lost their non-agricultural income, which was critical for their cash flow. The loss of this additional income leaves many of these growers and their businesses on the brink of collapse.

Consumption of cranberry products away from home has fallen by sixty percent since the onset of the pandemic, and prolonged severe economic damage will continue to affect cranberry consumption in the months and years to come. This economic fallout comes on the heels of years of significant losses in cranberry export markets due to retaliatory tariffs, which have undermined relationships with large overseas buyers that were developed over many years. Prior to the onset of retaliatory tariffs, China was the largest overseas buyer of cranberries, purchasing \$55 million of product annually. The global pandemic now means prolonged export market closures during the year when cranberry growers were optimistic about rebuilding relationships with international customers.

There are numerous challenges facing cranberry growers at this time, and they cannot weather them alone. Please use the funds provided by Congress to directly assist cranberry growers during this incredibly challenging time. These family farms play a critical role in providing Americans healthy food and driving our rural economy. I request that you provide these hardworking growers the resources they need to keep their businesses running so they can continue to contribute to our nation's productivity and wellbeing for generations to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tammy Baldwin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator