

Washington D.C. – Today, Congressmen Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), Dennis Cardoza (D-CA), Adam Putman (R-FL), John Salazar (D-CO), Randy Kuhl (R-NY), and Rick Larsen (D-WA), introduced the “Equitable Agriculture Today for a Healthy America Act” (EAT Healthy America Act). This bill would support specialty crop growers by increasing market access, encouraging and facilitating consumption of fruits and vegetables, funding research programs and increasing opportunities for family farmers in conservation programs.

“Specialty crops are an integral pillar of our agriculture economy and the Equitable Agriculture Today for a Healthy America Act supports the unique needs of the specialty crops produced by America’s farms and orchards by increasing access to global markets, providing funding for specialty crop research and development, and helping to increase conservation efforts,” said McCarthy. “This bill cuts across party and regional lines, and reflects the need to include specialty crops when we reauthorize the Farm Bill later this year.”

“The passage of the EAT Healthy America Act would represent a huge step forward for federal farm programs,” said Cardoza. “Specialty crops are an important part of local economies in all 50 states, and it is imperative that we recognize their vital contributions by ensuring that specialty crop growers have an important role in the future of American agriculture.”

“As a significant contributor to U.S. farm receipts and balance of trade, it is extremely important that the issues affecting fruit, vegetable and nursery crops play a meaningful role in the Farm Bill process,” said Putnam. “The Equitable Agriculture Today for a Healthy America Act elevates the federal government’s investment in key programs including pest and disease, nutrition, conservation, trade, research, as well as other challenges facing this important farm sector.”

“This is an historic opportunity to ensure the economic vitality of specialty crops to benefit our local farmers and the health of all Americans,” Salazar said. “I am committed to incorporating initiatives that keep our local family farmers competitive in the global market while providing a healthy food supply for our families. It is time for Congress to acknowledge this reality and rectify the inequities in federal farm programs. Additionally, the EAT Healthy America Act will - for the first time - give specialty crop producers in Colorado, and many other states equal access to vital conservation programs. It is critically important to promote a viable and competitive agricultural industry, and the Specialty Crops industry should be given the recognition they deserve.”

“The 2007 Farm Bill is a great opportunity to make American farm policy truly comprehensive, competitive and cohesive,” said Kuhl. “There are several key parts of this legislation that are important to the specialty crops industry and the health and well-being of American consumers. This bill provides critical assistance and tools to increase demand for specialty crops and keep the industry competitive in a changing global market while ensuring that all Americans have access to a nutritious food supply.”

“This bill will help our specialty crop growers access new markets and compete internationally,” Larsen said. “This legislation is a big leap toward recognizing and encouraging the contributions that specialty crop growers make to our economy in Washington state, the Pacific Northwest and across the country.”

Specialty crops, which include fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and nursery products, are a very significant part of the American agriculture industry, constituting almost fifty percent of total cash receipts.