



September 17, 2008

The Honorable Ed Shafer
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Shafer:

As members of the California Roundtable on Agriculture and the Environment, we are writing to express our strong support for the landmark Early Plant Pest Detection and Surveillance Improvement (EPDS) provisions of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, or “Farm Bill.” We are writing to respectfully request that you give favorable consideration to the risk-based criteria for allocating the EPDS funding to states.

The California Roundtable on Agriculture and the Environment (CRAE) is an alliance of agricultural, environmental, regulatory and social justice leaders seeking to promote an agriculture and food sector that is economically viable, environmentally sustainable, and socially responsible. As Californians, we are particularly pleased that Senators Boxer and Feinstein and their colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives, Congressmen Costa and Farr, were leaders in the effort to ensure that EPDS provisions were both authorized and funded in Fiscal Year 2009.

For more than a decade, agricultural and environmental groups, as well as state agricultural and conservation agencies have been working closely with the executive and legislative branches to improve our nation’s response to invasive pests, which are a significant, and growing, threat to U.S. agriculture and to our country’s natural resources. We are not only pleased with the inclusion of the EPDS provisions in the Farm Bill, but that the Congress and Administration worked to include a \$12 million “down payment” during FY2009 for a program that is scheduled to grow to the long-recommended \$50 million in annual funding by Fiscal Years 2011 and 2012. We strongly object to OMB’s proposal to eliminate \$12 million for plant pest and disease management programs.

As a state where agriculture is our key economic driver, and with diverse and unique ecosystems, California is particularly attuned to the risks posed by invasive pests. California produces 400

CRAE is a broad coalition of agriculture, environment, labor and public agency leaders working to promote an agriculture that is economically viable, environmentally sustainable and socially responsible.
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different commodities and, with more than \$36.6 billion in gross farm income in 2007 and 12% of U.S. total gross farm income, we are the largest agricultural state in the United States. Also, California is home to eleven international ports of entry that handle more than 32 percent of our nation's trade and several other land-based entry points, which makes our state a significant pathway for pest invasions that not only can harm California's environment and agricultural and forest resources, but threaten the entire United States.

As you consider how to most effectively allocate these funds in our nation's fight against invasive pests, we strongly encourage you to adhere to the criteria in the statute and support a risk-based allocation of funding, with priority consideration being given to: "the high risk of a State being affected by one or more plant pests and diseases, the number of international seaports in that State, the volume of international passengers and cargo and the geographic location of the State and if the location or types of agriculture commodities produced in the State are conducive to agricultural pest and disease establishment due to the climate, crop diversity or natural resources (including unique plant species) of the State."

Sincerely,

Agricultural Council of California
Corny Gallagher, Agribusiness Executive, Bank of America
California Association of Resource Conservation Districts
California Association of Winegrape Growers
California Farm Bureau Federation
California Federation of Certified Farmers' Markets
California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation
Community Alliance with Family Farmers
Defenders of Wildlife
Markon Cooperative
Marrone Organic Innovations, Inc.
Natural Resources Defense Council
The Nature Conservancy
Richard Rominger
San Joaquin Resource Conservation District
Sustainable Conservation
Western United Dairymen

cc: The California Congressional Delegation
CA Secretary for Environmental Protection Adams
CA Secretary of Resources Chrisman
CA Secretary of Agriculture Kawamura