



U.S. SENATOR MARIA CANTWELL

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Cantwell-Championed Farm Bill with Key Programs for Central Washington Passes Congress

New bill means 50 percent increase in research for specialty crops: apples, cherries, pears, grapes & potatoes

For the 1st time, Farm Bill makes long-term commitment to research for key Central Washington specialty crops

[VIDEO AVAILABLE](#)

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) hailed Congressional passage of the Farm Bill, which supports agriculture research and exports of Columbia Basin and Yakima Valley crops. For the first time, the Farm Bill makes long-term investments in research programs for specialty crops grown in Central Washington – including apples, cherries, pears, potatoes and grapes. The bill also continues critical export programs that Central Washington farmers use to ship produce around the world.

The Cantwell-championed legislation was approved in the Senate by a vote of 68-32 and the House by 251-166. It now heads to President Obama's desk for his signature. Ahead of today's vote, Cantwell gave a speech on the Senate floor urging her colleagues to quickly pass the bill.

View a video of her remarks [here](#).

In the Senate, Cantwell has led the push for passage of the Farm Bill that supports agriculture jobs in Central Washington and across the nation. In 2012, she and Senator Mike Johanns (R-NE) [led](#) a bipartisan letter with 44 senators urging action on a Farm Bill.

Cantwell called for passage of the Farm Bill in tours across the state in 2013, including stops in Pasco and Wapato. She [visited](#) the U.S. Department of Agriculture lab in Wapato where researchers

use Farm Bill grants to support agricultural research and [met](#) with growers at Allied Potato Northwest's processing facility in Pasco who use the bill's export-promotion programs.

“Today, Congress listened to the needs of growers in Central Washington,” said Cantwell. **“Now, the specialty crops grown in Central Washington will get the recognition they deserve. The Farm Bill, for the first time, makes a long-term commitment to specialty crop research and reauthorizes important export programs for our farmers. This is a shot in the arm that will create higher yields in our fields and bring those crops to new markets. This bill supports jobs across the entire industry and ensures that Washington remains a national leader in agriculture.”**

Cantwell has been a Congressional leader in fighting to increase investment in specialty crop research. This Farm Bill makes a long-term commitment to two key specialty crop programs and increases investment by more than 50 percent. The Specialty Crop Research Initiative will be funded at \$80 million a year and the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program will be funded at \$72.5 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2014-17 and \$85 million for FY 2018. In Central Washington, scientists have used Farm Bill grants to research methods to better monitor and prevent Zebra Chip disease, which discolors potatoes and reduces their value.

“Washington’s specialty crop industries are increasingly significant economic drivers in our state, but must compete in a global market,” said Dr. Jim McFerson, Manager of the Washington Tree Fruit Research Commission. **“Thankfully, the Washington Congressional delegation has come together on the current Farm Bill legislation, with its welcome support of research focused on the needs of our fruit and vegetable sector. We appreciate Sen. Cantwell’s genuine and long-standing commitment to helping us meet these research needs, essential to maintain profitability and sustain our justly renowned environment.”**

“The passing of the Farm Bill will provide the needed market access funding to grow exports and feed developing nations with safe and nutritious fruits from the U.S.,” said West Mathison, President of Stemilt Growers, a family-owned tree fruit growing, packing and shipping company based in Wenatchee.

The Farm Bill also continues support for the Market Access Program (MAP) and the Foreign Market Development program, which help increase agricultural exports. MAP has helped Pasco's Allied Potato Northwest increase its potato shipments to Vietnam, which opened to U.S. fresh potato exports in 2010.

“We are excited that the Senate has approved the Farm Bill and it’s headed to the President for a signature,” said Chris Voigt, Executive Director of the Washington State Potato Commission. **“This Farm Bill recognizes the value of specialty crop research which is critical in keeping us competitive in a global marketplace. It’s the research that allows us to figure out how to grow more food per acre with fewer resources.**

“And it’s about jobs too,” Voigt continued. **“There are over 23,500 jobs associated with the growing, processing, and movement of the Washington potato crop. Those jobs would be in other parts of the world if it wasn’t for the research that the Farm Bill provides. I’d like to thank Senator Cantwell for her continued support for the 300+ crops grown in Washington**

State and her undivided attention to making sure that this Farm Bill was approved by the U.S. Senate.”

Chris Schlect, President of the Northwest Horticultural Council, a Yakima-based organization that represents the tree fruit industry, added: **“Apple, pear, and cherry growers will benefit from passage of the Farm Bill. Agricultural research, export market promotion, nutrition programs, and other aspects of the bill will help all of specialty crop agriculture, including our area's tree fruit industry. We thank Senator Cantwell for her strong support of these provisions and her vote for this important bill.”**

The Farm Bill includes Cantwell’s Pulse School Pilot provision, which would provide the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) \$10 million through 2017 to purchase pulse crops to use in school breakfasts and lunches. Flours made from pulse crops could be added to breads, tortillas and pastas to enhance their nutritional value. Pulse crops are an excellent, cost-effective source of fiber, potassium, protein and other essential vitamins and nutrients.

“Pulse Crops are truly one of nature's super foods,” said Tim McGreevy, CEO of the American Pulse Association and the USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council. **“The producers of pulse crops are thrilled that the School Pulse Crop Products Program is included in the final Farm Bill. We believe the increased consumption of pulse crops could provide solutions to the health and nutrition problems facing our kids.**

“Pulse crops are an economical source of dietary fiber, potassium, iron, magnesium and protein,” continued McGreevy. **“Through this program we look forward to working with USDA and our nation’s school districts to introduce new healthy pulse crop menu choices that kids will love. Pulse crop farmers and industry would like to thank Senator Cantwell, and her many colleagues, for her leadership to get the School Pulse Crop Program in the final Farm Bill.”**

Key provisions in the Senate Farm Bill for Central Washington include:

- **Specialty Crop Research:** The bill will for the first time make a long term investment in the Specialty Crop Research Initiative and the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. The Specialty Crop Research Initiative will be funded at \$80 million a year and the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program will be funded at \$72.5 million in FY 2014-17 and \$85 million for FY 2018. That represents a more than 50 percent increase in investments for both programs from levels in the 2008 Farm Bill. WSU has received Specialty Crop Block Grant investments to develop new planting and harvesting methods for tree fruit to help increase crop yields and protect workers. The Economic Research Service estimates that for every \$1 invested in publicly funded research, \$10 of economic activity is generated.
- **Market Access Program:** The Farm Bill will invest \$200 million a year in MAP, which the Washington Apple Commission has used to reach consumers and businesses in India. These efforts increased the number of Washington apples being sold there from a few thousand cartons to a record 3.3 million cartons worth over \$61 million last season.

Washington’s wine industry has also used MAP to boost overseas sales. The Washington State Wine Commission secured MAP investments that helped the commission bring around 65 international wine buyers to Washington state for tours, seminars and tasting. Before the

MAP grant, buyers from around 15 countries came for this tour according to the Washington State Wine Commission. Participating wineries have developed export opportunities in Scandinavia, Canada and China.

- **Clean Plant Network:** The Farm Bill will also invest in the Clean Plant Network at \$62.5 million per year through FY 2017 and then \$75 million in FY 2018. The network provides pathogen-tested plant material for specialty crop growers to better protect their produce from disease and blight. WSU's Prosser Research and Extension Center is the main Northwest center for the network. The Prosser site provides clean plant material to thousands of grape and hop farmers in Washington state to help increase crop yields.

Washington state a national hub for agriculture and leading center for agricultural research. The agriculture industry employs 160,000 people and generates \$40 billion for the state economy. Washington state grows more than 250 specialty crops and ranks number one in production in the nation for 11 commodities, including apples, red raspberries, sweet cherries, pears, and hops. The state is also the third highest recipient of Specialty Crop Block Grants in the nation behind California and Florida.

"A new Farm Bill is essential in assisting the Washington apple industry in increasing demand and promoting our products to over 26 international markets," said Todd Fryhover, President of the Washington State Apple Commission. **"As I board a plane to Germany to attend Fruit Logistica where we facilitate international partnerships between industry and importers of Washington apples, the MAP provides valuable resources to further the reach of Washington around the globe."**

Yakima County is one of Washington state's largest and most diverse agriculture economies. The county holds more than 1.6 million acres of farmland that produces crops with a market value of \$1.2 billion. Yakima County is a leading producer of pears, sweet cherries and apples in the state.

"Passage of the Farm Bill is important to the Tree Fruits in Washington state. The Farm Bill is part of the basic infrastructure that keeps our industry competitive," said Jim Doornink, owner of Doornink Fruit Ranch in Wapato and Chairman of the Washington Tree Fruit Research Commission. **"The Tree Fruit Industry is thankful that Senator Cantwell has given such strong support to the Farm Bill. Its passage will strengthen our industry's ability to solve research problems and provide a better product to the consumer."**

Potatoes are Washington state's third largest agricultural crop. The potato industry in Washington state provides an economic impact of \$4.6 billion and supports 23,500 jobs throughout the state. Franklin County has about 33,000 acres of potatoes; Grant has 43,000 acres, while Benton County has about 27,000 acres of potatoes. The Columbia Basin – including Grant, Franklin, Benton and Adams counties – produces \$2.5 billion worth of agricultural products from more than 5,000 farms.

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