

DOC HASTINGS

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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

January 22, 2008

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Chairman
House Agriculture Committee
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Ranking Member
House Agriculture Committee
1305 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Goodlatte:

As you proceed to conference on the reauthorization of the Farm Bill, I ask that you include the \$15 million authorized for the Asparagus Market Loss Program. This language was part of the Senate-passed version of the Farm Bill.

Enacted in 1991, the Andean Trade Preferences Act (ATPA) included a provision to extend duty-free access to the U.S. market by Peruvian asparagus growers. This was part of a misguided effort to reduce drug production in Peru. Since the ATPA was enacted, the domestic asparagus industry has been decimated. U.S. asparagus acreage has decreased from 90,000 acres in 1990 to less than 49,000 acres in 2006. Farmers have been forced to lower their prices by as much as 34 percent in a single year and have sold their product at below the cost of production in 3 of the last 5 years. Asparagus canneries in Washington state, which used to can more than 55 million pounds of asparagus annually, have closed and moved overseas.

Prior to requesting assistance in the Farm Bill, I worked with the asparagus industry to mitigate the impacts of the ATPA through multiple avenues, including attempts to amend the ATPA as well as negotiate relief through the Andean Free Trade Agreement. Asparagus growers have also sought compensation through the Trade Adjustment Act program, and pursued trade relief against imports under existing antidumping laws. Unfortunately, none of these attempts were successful.

I respectfully request that you support the Senate language for the Asparagus Market Loss Program in the final conference report. This funding is critical to the survival of the U.S. asparagus industry. I would be happy to provide you with any additional information you may need on this matter. Thank you again for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Doc Hastings".

Doc Hastings