

2009-2012 Farm Bill Spending (actual) on Fruits, Nuts and Vegetables: Woefully Inadequate to Address US Consumption Deficits

Although fruit, nut and vegetable growers provide foods that are vital for improving America's nutrition and reducing the costly toll of diet-related disease, they have historically benefitted little from US agriculture policy. The 2008 farm bill began to increase support for healthy food by providing modest but important gains for programs that promote production, research and marketing of fruits, nuts and vegetables. This funding is dwarfed, however, by federal spending to subsidize commodity crops that provide feed for livestock, raw material for processed food and fuel for cars. Moreover, the funding, especially for marketing and promotion, is far too low to significantly raise the extremely low U.S. rates of fruits and vegetable consumption. According to the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), fewer than one in ten Americans eat an adequate quantity of fruits and vegetables.

Government support for fruits, nuts and vegetables, also known as "specialty crops," differs considerably from commodity subsidies. Rather than supporting growers directly through crop insurance premium subsidies or direct payments and price supports, the government provides indirect support for specialty crops through, nutrition, marketing and research programs.

EWG data show that between from 2009 through 2012, the farm bill spent more than \$44.3 billion¹, or about \$11 billion a year, to subsidize grain, fiber and seed crops. That's nearly than seven times as much as it spent to support specialty crops, even though the market value of those crops – \$415 billion – **was less than twice that** of fruits, nuts and vegetables. EWG's analysis shows that during the same period, the farm bill spent just \$6.4 billion, an average of \$1.6 billion a year, to support specialty crops. The market value of these crops during this time was estimated at \$239 billion.

Programs that support nutrition and food procurement accounted for 38 percent of all funds spent on specialty crops. The largest expenditure of federal funds supports purchases of fruits, nuts and vegetables (mostly canned and frozen food), primarily for school food. This program is authorized in the farm bill but paid for by a permanent appropriation of customs receipts designated as "section 32" in a 1935 law. Research on specialty crops accounted for 21 percent. Just 10 percent went to marketing and promotion. The Market Assistance Program (MAP), which provides general support for export promotion and accounts for 43 percent of the marketing spending, does nothing to spur national demand for healthy food. A smaller amount of marketing funds (37 percent) goes to the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. While some of this money goes to promote increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, a significant amount goes to support research. More specific data on this program in California is available in [this report](#).

Even though California produces 50 percent of the nation's fruits and vegetables, the state receives on average just 24 percent of the farm bill's specialty crop spending.

¹ This number includes crop insurance premium subsidies for farmers as well as direct payments, counter cyclical, the average crop revenue election program, loan deficiency payments, marketing loan gains and USDA research. The number would be even higher if it included disaster payments and market promotion funding.

**Farm Bill Spending on Specialty Crop Programs (Fruits, Nuts and Vegetables)
US and California
2009-2012**

	2009		2010		2011		2012		2009-2012		
	US	CA	US	CA	US	CA	US	CA	US	CA	% CA of US
Program Totals (in millions)	\$1,514.6	\$374.9	\$1,633.4	\$429.4	\$1602.9	\$342.4	\$1682.7	\$381.2	\$6433.6	\$1527.9	24%
<i>Procurement/Nutrition</i>	567.7	139.3	643.9	183.4	619.6	99.2	592.9	146.2	2,424.1	568.1	23%
Section 32 Purchase of Fruits and Vegetables for Distribution (includes processed foods)*	422.8	128.5	446.1	169.7	389.6	81.4	357.2	126.5	1615.7	506.1	31%
Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program	72.5	5.0	110.3	7.7	158.0	10.8	163.5	11.2	504.3	34.7	7%
Department of Defense Fresh Program (fresh fruit and vegetable purchases for schools)	50	5.0	65	5.2	50.0	6.2	50	7.6	215.4	24	11%
Senior Farmers Market Program	22.4	0.8	22.5	0.8	22.2	0.8	22.2	.8	89.3	3.3	4%
<i>Marketing and Promotion</i>	130.6	50.9	135.5	54.1	152.7	55.1	153.3	35.9	572.1	196.1	34%
Market Access Program ¹	60.6	31.7	65.2	31.9	60.7	29.7	59.8	12.3	246.3	105.6	43%
Specialty Crop Block Grant Program	48.5	16.3	54.4	17.3	54.3	18.7	55.4	17.0	212.6	69.3	33%
Value Added Producer Grants Program ¹	9.1	1.4	0	0	15.3	1.8	16.8	1.3	41.2	4.5	11%
Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops	5.2	0.7	7.3	4.2	8.4	3.3	9	3.9	29.9	12.1	40%
Farmers Market Promotion Program	5.0	0.5	5.0	0.4	10	1.1	9.2	1	29.2	3	10%
Socially Disadvantaged Producer Grants ¹	1.1	0	2.6	0	2.7	0	1.6	.1	8	.1	1%
Quality Samples Program ¹	1.1	0.3	1.0	0.3	1.3	0.5	1.5	.4	4.9	1.5	31%
<i>Research, Education, and Outreach</i>	330.0	54.9	362.8	70.9	334.2	58.9	353.9	64.0	1380.9	248.7	18%
USDA Specialty Crop Research ²	306.1	50.8	301.9	48.4	265.1	42.4	291	46.5	1164.1	188.1	16%
Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention	12.0	2.7	45.0	19.7	50	14.0	50	15.3	157	51.7	33%
Community Outreach and Assistance Partnership Program	8.6	0.5	9.6	0.3	13.6	0.7	7.9	.49	39.8	2.1	5%
National Clean Plant Network*	3.3	0.9	6.3	2.5	5.5	1.8	4.9	1.7	20	6.9	35%
<i>Crop Insurance (Fruits, nuts and vegetables only)</i>	486.3	129.8	491.2	120.9	496.2	129.2	582.6	135.2	2,056.3	515.0	25%
Crop Insurance Premium Subsidies	486.3	129.8	491.2	120.9	496.2	129.2	582.6	135.2	2,056	515.0	25%

Source: EWG analysis of USDA documents, websites, awards information and communication with USDA staff

* 2012 California data is estimated based on prior 3 year average

Specialty crop component

1. Includes Specialty Crop Research Initiative, specialty crop components of Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE), Agriculture Food Research Initiative and other NIFA and USDA funded research. 2012 numbers are estimates based on the average of research expenditures from 2009-2012.

Farm Bill Programs that Support Specialty Crops (Fruits, Nuts, Vegetables)

[Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program](#) – This program is administered at the national level by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and at the state level by participating states, primarily through Departments of Education. The program focuses on introducing children to a variety of produce, combating childhood obesity through improved eating habits and providing healthier snack choices in schools.

[DOD Fresh Program \(fresh fruit and vegetable purchases for schools\)](#) – The Department of Defense (DOD) Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program was created to increase the variety of fresh fruit and vegetables available to schools.

[Section 32 fruit, nut and vegetable purchases for nutrition programs](#) – Since 1935, this permanent appropriation has set aside 30 percent of annual customs receipts to fund child nutrition, school lunch and other domestic food programs, as well as to fund farm economic and disaster relief. Most of the appropriation is administered by USDA and is earmarked for child nutrition programs; the remainder is administered by the Secretary of Agriculture.

[Specialty Crop Block Grant Program](#) – This program was authorized in 2004 for the sole purpose of enhancing the competitiveness of specialty crops, which include fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture.

[Market Access Program \(MAP\)](#) – MAP focuses on helping U.S. producers, including specialty crop growers, and other organizations to promote U.S. agricultural products and expand export markets through consumer promotions, market research, technical assistance and trade servicing.

[Specialty Crop Market News Allocations](#) – Established in 1915, the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's Marketing News program has provided timely, reliable and unbiased price and market information for crops, including specialty crops, to producers, processors and other concerned parties.

[Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops](#) – The TASC program funds projects to address and overcome threats and barriers to the export of U.S. specialty crops, including technical, sanitary and phytosanitary obstacles.

[Quality Samples Program](#) – QSP works to enhance exports of U.S. agricultural products by helping agricultural trade organizations to provide samples to potential overseas customers to demonstrate the quality and usability of U.S. products.

[Value-Added Producer Grant Program](#) – Provides grants to support marketing of value-added agricultural products, including specialty crops, as well as for farm-based renewable energy.

[Farmers Market Promotion Program](#) – FMPP provides grants to agricultural cooperatives, producer networks and associations and other organizations to improve and expand domestic farmers' markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs, agri-tourism and other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities.

[Business and Industry Loan Program](#) – This program guarantees quality loans to strengthen private credit structure and thereby improve the economic and environmental climate in rural communities. At least 5 percent of funds are set aside for local and regional food projects.

[Community Food Projects Grants Program](#) – Since 1996 this program has addressed issues of food security by providing grants to develop community food projects and improve the self-reliance of community members for their food needs through programs that benefit agricultural producers and low-income consumers.

[Healthy Food Urban Enterprise Development Center](#) – HUFED provides increased access to affordable, nutritious foods to underserved urban communities, including improving access to locally produced agricultural products.

[Specialty Crop Research and Extension Program](#) – SCRI provides grants to solve agricultural industry concerns via research and extension activities. The grants cover five focus areas: research to improve crop characteristics; programs to identify and mitigate threats from pests and diseases, including threats to specialty crop pollinators; programs to improve production efficiency, productivity and profitability; new innovations and technology; and methods that address potential food safety hazards in the production and processing of specialty crops.

[Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention](#) – Provides funding under section 10201 of the 2008 Farm Bill to combat the introduction and distribution of plant pests and diseases that pose a threat to U.S. agricultural and environmental concerns.

[National Clean Plant Network](#) – NCPN is a partnership between the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CREES). Its purpose is to establish a network of clean plant centers to diagnose and eliminate pathogens and provide clean plant material to states and to private nurseries and producers for certified clean plant programs.

[Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education](#) – Established in 1988, SARE provides grants to fund ongoing innovations in sustainable agriculture to every U.S. state and Island Protectorate.

[Senior Farmers Market Program](#) – The program provides senior citizens with increased access to locally produced, fresh, healthy foods, increases domestic consumption of agricultural products and supports development of domestic farmers' markets, roadside stands and community support agriculture programs via grants to states, U.S. Territories and tribal governments.