



# GROWER NEWS

YOUR VOICE IN THE SPECIALTY CROP INDUSTRY

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WINTER 2026 | VOLUME 30 | NO. 1



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**MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION:**

Membership in GFVGA is open to any and all interested persons. Our organization's goal is to enhance the business environment of our industry through education, friendship, research, participation and cooperation. Membership forms are available by calling (706) 845-8200 or (877) 994-3842.

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# “GFVGA REMAINS COMMITTED TO ADVOCACY, EDUCATION, AND LEADERSHIP FOR GEORGIA’S FRUIT AND VEGETABLE INDUSTRY”

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Austin Hamilton, President  
Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers  
Association

As we begin a new year, I want to start by saying thank you to our members, partners, sponsors, and supporters for making the Southeast Regional Fruit and Vegetable Conference such a tremendous success. Once again, this event demonstrated the strength, professionalism, and resilience of Georgia’s fruit and vegetable industry. From educational sessions to meaningful conversations among growers and industry leaders, the conference reflected what can be accomplished when our membership comes together with a shared purpose.

Your participation and support are what make this conference—and our association—successful. GFVGA exists to serve you, and the energy and collaboration we witnessed throughout the conference reaffirm the value of a strong, unified grower voice.

That unity is especially important as we confront one of the most pressing challenges facing specialty crop agriculture today: agricultural labor. GFVGA has taken a leadership role in this space by helping establish the Ag Wage Reform Coalition ([agwagereform.com](http://agwagereform.com)), a national effort focused on securing meaningful, long-term improvements to the H-2A program. This coalition brings together growers and agricultural organizations from across the country who share a common understanding: the current system is unsustainable, unpredictable, and in urgent need of reform.

Through the Ag Wage Reform Coalition, GFVGA is working to advance practical solutions that maintain a legal workforce while addressing escalating labor costs, regulatory complexity, and operational uncertainty. Our goal is not short-term fixes, but durable reforms that allow growers to remain competitive, plan for the future, and continue producing safe, affordable food in the United States.

In February, GFVGA leadership will be in Washington, D.C., meeting directly with members of Congress and key policymakers to press for changes to the H-2A program. These conversations are critical, and they are far more effective when lawmakers understand that they are hearing from a broad, organized, and engaged grower community. Your membership and support give GFVGA credibility and influence at the national level, and we will continue to use that voice aggressively and responsibly on your behalf.

As we look ahead, GFVGA remains committed to advocacy, education, and leadership for Georgia’s fruit and vegetable industry. Thank you for your continued involvement and trust. Together, we will keep pushing for policies that protect growers, strengthen agriculture, and secure the future of our industry.

## **Austin Hamilton**

Southern Valley Fruit & Vegetable, Inc.  
GFVGA President



GFVGA

# OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association Announces the 2026 Board of Directors

The Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association (GFVGA) is proud to announce its newly appointed officers and directors for the 2026 term. These dedicated agricultural leaders will guide the association's mission of promoting and supporting Georgia's fruit and vegetable industry.

### Officers

**President:** Austin Hamilton, Southern Valley Fruit & Vegetable – Norman Park, GA

**Vice President:** Karla Thompson, JET Farms Georgia – Camilla, GA

**Secretary:** Jaime Patrick, Patrick Family Farms – Omega, GA

**Treasurer:** Bill Brim, Lewis Taylor Farms – Tifton, GA

**Past President:** Sam Watson, Chill C Farms – Moultrie, GA

### Board of Directors

#### **Term expires 2026:**

Jordan Carter, Leger & Son – Cordele, GA

Phil Hart, Fresh Plants, Inc. – Americus, GA

Jason Herndon, L.G. Herndon, Jr. Farms – Lyons, GA

#### **Term expires 2027:**

Wendell Stockton, Grimmway Farms – Lake Park, GA

Michael Thomas, Thomas Family Farms – Blackshear, GA

Jason Tyrone, TyCor Farms – Lake Park, GA

#### **Term expires 2028:**

John Baker, Baker Farms – Ellenton, Georgia

Brandon DeWitt, DeWitt Produce – Morven, Georgia

Sean Lennon, Fitzgerald Fruit Farms – Woodbury, Georgia

GFVGA congratulates and welcomes this group of leaders as they continue to champion the future of Georgia agriculture.





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# PARTNERSHIP

— FOR GROWTH —

## THANK YOU

We thank you for your consideration in the annual Partnership Program with the Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Foundation. This Program provides our industry champions the opportunity to support the work of the Association beyond annual membership dues. Your tax-deductible contribution to the Partnership supports the Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Foundation which drives and funds important initiatives like education and research that are on full display each year at the Southeast Regional Fruit & Vegetable Conference.

*Please view the next page for benefits.*

## PARTNERSHIP LEVELS

- Legacy \$10,000 and Above
- Champion \$7,500
- Sustainer \$5,000
- Patron \$2,500
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# PARTNERSHIP

— FOR GROWTH —

## BENEFITS CHART

FRIEND \$1,000	PATRON \$2,500	SUSTAINER \$5,000	CHAMPION \$7,500	LEGACY \$10,000 +	
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Recognized in GFVGA Communications throughout the Year
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Recognition on GFVGA Website
	✓	✓	✓	✓	Recognition at GFVGA In-Person Events
	✓	✓	✓	✓	Printed and Digital Recognition at SE Regional
		✓	✓	✓	Co-branded Social Media Post on GFVGA Channels
		✓	✓	✓	Access to Meeting Rooms at SE Regional
			✓	✓	2 Tickets for GAC Harvest Celebration and Legislative Breakfast
			✓	✓	Exclusive Recognition on GFVGA Webinar Series
				✓	Speaking Opportunity at GFVGA Annual Meeting at SE Regional

**Partnership commitments are due each year by July 1.**  
**The Partnership Program is an exclusive benefit for active GFVGA Members.**

[www.gfvga.org](http://www.gfvga.org)

# BILL BRIM RECEIVES INAUGURAL CHARLES HALL LEADERSHIP AWARD

On January 10, during the Southeast Regional Fruit & Vegetable Conference Awards Breakfast in Savannah, the Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association presented the very first Charles Hall Leadership Award to Bill Brim.



Bill Brim, left, accepting the first Charles Hall Leadership Award from GFVGA President, Austin Hamilton, right

If there was ever a right person to receive the inaugural award, it was Bill.

The award was created to honor the legacy of the late Charles T. Hall, Jr., who spent more than 25 years championing Georgia's fruit and vegetable growers. Charles helped guide GFVGA through decades of growth and advocacy, always making sure growers' voices were heard. Just as importantly, he helped build a community, and Bill Brim was there with him from the very beginning.



Bill and Charles were best friends who spent countless miles together building the association and advocating for Georgia agriculture. When Bill accepted the award, he didn't talk of all they'd accomplished together but instead shared a memory that perfectly captured Charles' character.

He recalled the early days of GFVGA, when the two often shared hotel rooms while traveling. Like clockwork, Charles would be up around 4:00 a.m., already typing away on his laptop, loud enough, Bill joked, to wake anyone in the room. It was a small but familiar reminder of who Charles was—always working, always preparing, and always focused on what needed to be done next.

The Charles Hall Leadership Award recognizes members who go above and beyond for Georgia's fruit and vegetable community, leaders who serve with integrity, collaboration, and heart.

As GFVGA Executive Vice President Chris Butts shared, Bill is "a towering figure whose influence has shaped our industry for decades." He praised Bill's leadership at Lewis Taylor Farms, his tireless service to GFVGA, and his unwavering commitment to Georgia's growers. Over the years, Bill has served the association in nearly every capacity, advocated for the industry in both Atlanta and Washington, D.C., and generously mentored others along the way.

Charles may no longer be with us, but through this award, and through leaders like Bill Brim, his spirit, his values, and even those early morning keystrokes live on. The first ever Charles Hall Leadership Award honors not only Bill's decades of service, but also the bond between two men who believed deeply in this industry and in each other. Through their shared legacy, the future of Georgia's fruit and vegetable community remains in good hands.

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# STRONG ATTENDANCE, INNOVATION, AND INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP DEFINE THE 2026 SOUTHEAST REGIONAL FRUIT & VEGETABLE CONFERENCE

Georgia's fruit and vegetable industry showed up in force at the 2026 Southeast Regional Fruit and Vegetable Conference, delivering a week defined by record engagement, expanded innovation, and meaningful conversations that moved the industry forward. From a packed, newly expanded tradeshow floor to timely education and hands-on experiences, SE Regional once again proved why it remains a can't-miss event for the produce community.

## **A Dynamic Tradeshow Floor and Forward-Looking Education**

Attendees explored a vibrant tradeshow floor showcasing a wide range of innovative products, services, and advancements in agriculture. A highlight of this year's expo was Innovation Row, presented by UGA Grand Farm, which spotlighted emerging technologies and hands-on solutions shaping the future of fruit and vegetable production.

The conference also delivered a robust lineup of educational sessions, covering commodity-specific cultivation best practices, the latest research findings, and key business operations topics. Legislative advocacy, agricultural labor and H-2A updates, and discussions surrounding the fentanyl crisis in agriculture took center stage in business-focused sessions, equipping attendees with timely insights to navigate today's evolving challenges.

[Continued on next page]





### Engaging Experiences for the Entire Produce Community

New this year, SE Regional introduced a Kids' Area on the tradeshow floor, creating a space for young attendees to learn and have fun. Activities were led by UGA Extension Agents Lauren Stanley and Madison Britt and included story time with 2025 Georgia Watermelon Ambassador Katelyn Lindsey, helping connect the next generation to agriculture in a meaningful way.

GFVGA also hosted another successful Women's Brunch, bringing together women from across the produce industry for networking and connection. GFVGA Vice President Karla Thompson welcomed attendees, followed by Kim Cantrell, who led an interactive exercise focused on identifying leadership styles. The brunch offered a valuable space for growth, collaboration, and relationship-building.



### Honoring Excellence and Legacy at the Awards Breakfast

During the final morning in Savannah, GFVGA recognized outstanding leaders and contributors at the annual Awards Breakfast. This year's program was especially meaningful with the presentation of the inaugural Charles Hall Leadership Award, honoring the late Charles Hall, a beloved industry leader and co-founder of the Southeast Regional Conference.

The award was presented to Bill Brim, a longtime friend of Hall and a founding force behind SE Regional, whose continued leadership has played a major role in shaping the conference into what it is today.



[Continued on next page]



### Other 2026 Award Recipients

More photos and the full listing of Award Recipients are highlighted throughout the following pages.

### Looking Ahead

GFVGA extends its sincere thanks to the exhibitors, attendees, speakers, sponsors, and volunteers who make the Southeast Regional Fruit and Vegetable Conference a continued success.

# JOIN US BACK IN SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

## JANUARY 7-9, 2027



2026

# MR. PEACH RECIPIENT

► **Mark Sanchez,**  
*Lane Southern Orchards*  
*Fort Valley, Georgia*

Mark Sanchez has served as Chief Executive Officer of Southern Orchards Management in Fort Valley, Georgia, since 2006. Under his leadership, the company is now farming 5,000 acres of peaches and 6,000 acres of pecans across middle Georgia and operates one of the state's largest agritourism destinations. Lane Southern Orchards welcomes more than 300,000 visitors annually, offering a behind-the-scenes look at the farm and packing operations, along with seasonal attractions including strawberry picking, a corn maze, and a full calendar of family-friendly events.

Before joining Lane, Sanchez spent more than two decades in Florida agriculture, primarily in citrus. He served as General Manager and Executive Vice President of Sun Ag, Inc. at Fellsmere Farms in the Vero Beach area, where he oversaw a diversified 26,000-acre operation. Fellsmere Farms encompassed 16,000 acres of grapefruit and oranges, and a state-of-the-art fresh citrus packing facility,

A native of Vero Beach, Florida, Sanchez earned a B.S. in Agriculture (Fruit Crops) from the University of Florida in 1980 and a J.D. from Stetson University College of Law in 1985. He has been a member of the Florida Bar since 1985. He and his wife, Carolyn Hoequist Sanchez, have been married for 35 years and have two daughters, both graduates of the University of Florida.



Mark Sanchez, left with Tyler Wainwright, right



# CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR AWARD RECIPIENTS

## GFVGA ANNUAL AWARDS BREAKFAST



Jordan Carter  
Produce Business 40 Under 40



Garrett Hibbs  
Vegetable Grower News 40 Under 40



Joshua Dawson  
Vegetable Grower News 40 Under 40

### Produce Business 40 Under 40

- **Jordan Carter**, Leger & Son, Inc.
- **Marianna Skrine**, Second Vice President of Nickey Gregory Company

### Vegetable Grower News 40 Under 40

- **Jordan Carter**, Leger & Son, Inc.
- **Zack Snipes**, Area Horticulture Agent for Clemson Extension
- **Garrett Hibbs**, Hall County Extension Coordinator & Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent
- **Joshua Dawson**, Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent with Fort Valley State University



Aries Haygood  
2025 Grower Achievement Award

### 2025 Grower Achievement Award

- **Aries Haygood**, A&M Farms

[Continued on next page]

Continued from previous page: **CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR AWARD RECIPIENTS**



Jeff Cook - D.W. Brooks Award for Excellence in Public Service

**D.W. Brooks Award for Excellence in Public Service Programs**

- **Jeff Cook**, Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent & Coordinator for UGA Extension



Kent Hamilton - 2025 Sun Belt Ag Expo Farmer of the Year

**2025 Sun Belt Ag Expo Farmer of the Year**

- **Kent Hamilton**, Southern Valley Fruit & Vegetable, Inc.



Ty Torrance - GACAA Vegetable Research and Demonstration Award

**GACAA Vegetable Research/ Demonstration Award**

- **Ty Torrance**, ANR Vegetable Agent for Southwest District for Colquitt, Tift, and Ware Counties



Beth Oleson - 20 Years of Service to the Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association

**Celebrating 20 Years of Service to the Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association**

- **Beth Oleson**



2025

# DONNIE MORRIS EXCELLENCE IN EXTENSION AWARD ANNOUNCEMENT

## The Donnie H. Morris Award of Excellence in Extension

— presented annually by the Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association (GFVGA) — honors outstanding personnel from University of Georgia Cooperative Extension whose work directly supports Georgia’s fruits and vegetables industry. Established in 1998 and renamed in 2006 to honor industry leader Donnie H. Morris, the award recognizes Extension specialists and agents for their significant contributions to growers across the state.

### This year’s recipient is Dr. Gopinath (Gopi) Munisamy

of the University of Georgia, distinguished professor of agricultural marketing within the Department of Agricultural & Applied Economics and a faculty member of the Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development (CAED).

Dr. Munisamy brings decades of research and Extension engagement to Georgia’s agricultural economy, and his selection acknowledges his exceptional work bridging economic analysis with practical support for the produce and broader farming community.

Dr. Munisamy’s scholarship centers on agricultural markets, trade, productivity and policy—skills he has leveraged in service to Georgia’s growers. Among his contributions is the annual “Georgia Ag Economy Outlook” presented through UGA and CAED, in which he offers timely, data-driven insight

into farm income trends, export dynamics and commodity structure of the state’s agriculture. In the 2025 edition, he highlighted how Georgia’s agriculture — valued at an \$18.3 billion direct contribution and an \$83.6 billion economic footprint — depends on accurate forecasting and market signals to support planning and risk-management for growers.

For produce growers in particular, Dr. Munisamy’s work helps in several tangible ways. By analyzing market conditions, input cost trends and export opportunities, he enables growers to make better-informed decisions about crop mix, timing of harvest and marketing strategy. His Extension role ensures that this rigorous economic research is translated into actionable guidance for county agents and growers alike. UGA’s Extension directory lists him among the faculty charged with translating “science of everyday living for farmers, families and communities.”

In practical terms, the signals and forecasts he provides assist Georgia’s produce sector in navigating volatility in labor costs, input inflation, export competition and evolving consumption patterns. While not a horticulturist himself, his economic frameworks support specialists and agents who work directly with fruit and vegetable operations—for instance, enabling better evaluation of the profitability of new crops, or the timing of marketing windows when excess supply depresses prices. His global experience—formerly with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service and as



Dr. Gopinath Munisamy, left with Austin Hamilton, right, President, GFVGA

chair of international economics bodies—brings a broad lens that benefits Georgia producers in an increasingly interconnected world.

In awarding Dr. Munisamy the Donnie Morris Award, GFVGA and the produce industry acknowledge that modern farming success depends not only on the field and the greenhouse, but also on the economic intelligence that underpins strategic decisions. His efforts enhance resilience and competitiveness for Georgia’s farms, especially those in fruits and vegetables, by equipping them with the analytical tools to anticipate and respond to change. For Georgia’s growers, that means a stronger ability to adapt, plan ahead, and thrive.

Congratulations to Dr. Gopi Munisamy on this well-deserved recognition of his service and impact on Georgia agriculture.



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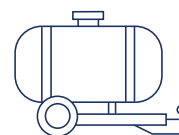
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2025

# DAN BREMER SERVICE AWARD ANNOUNCEMENT

**The Dan Bremer Service Award**, presented annually by the Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association (GFVGA), recognizes individuals or organizations who have delivered extraordinary service to Georgia's fruit and vegetable industry by enhancing the agricultural workforce. The award honors those who advocate both for growers and for the laborers whose efforts sustain the industry.

## This year's recipient is

**Dorothy Miles** of Miles of Miles Berry Farm in Baxley, Georgia.

The award recognizes courageous leadership in serving as primary plaintiffs in the landmark lawsuit Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association and Miles Berry Farm v. U.S. Department of Labor. In that case, GFVGA and Miles Berry Farm challenged the U.S. Department of Labor's "Improving Protections for Workers in Temporary Agricultural Employment in the United States" rule, arguing that the agency exceeded its authority by granting collective-bargaining and concerted activity rights to H-2A workers—rights from which U.S. farm workers have historically been excluded under the National Labor Relations Act.

In August 2024, the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Georgia granted the preliminary injunction requested by the plaintiffs, halting enforcement of the rule in Georgia (and other plaintiff states) and specifically protecting Miles Berry Farm and GFVGA members from the new regulatory burden. The court found that the DOL had likely exceeded its statutory authority and that the rule would impose irreparable financial harm on farms like Miles Berry Farm.



Dorothy Miles

For Georgia produce growers, this win was significant: it prevented the implementation of a sweeping regulation that could have substantially increased labor and compliance costs, introduced new collective bargaining frameworks, and disrupted established hiring practices.

By stepping up as a plaintiff, the Miles family demonstrated exceptional service not only to their own operation but to the entire state's fruit and vegetable industry. Their willingness to stand at the forefront of a high-stakes legal battle on behalf of Georgia producers exemplifies the very values the Dan Bremer Service Award was designed to highlight. Their leadership has moved the industry needle by protecting the workforce infrastructure, securing regulatory stability, and helping maintain a level playing field for Georgia growers.

In presenting the 2025 award to Dorothy Miles, GFVGA acknowledges not just their farm's success in produce, but their advocacy, their courage, and their commitment to the broader community of Georgia growers. Congratulations to them for this well-deserved honor.





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# THE WASHINGTON UPDATE

BY ROBERT REDDING, *GFVGA LOBBYIST, WASHINGTON, D.C.*

## GFVGA PROVIDES COMMENTS IN THE USMCA REVIEW PROCESS

On November 3, 2025, the Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association submitted comments to Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Ambassador Jamieson Greer regarding the upcoming United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA) formal review process scheduled to begin on July 1, 2026. The comments expressed the U.S. fruit and vegetable industry’s continued burdens due to competition with seasonal imports from Mexico.

The comments included: *“The continued influx of low-cost imported produce during U.S. harvest seasons places downward pressure on farmgate prices and undermines the economic stability of local producers. For example, foreign fruits and vegetables flood the U.S. market, often at the same*

*time U.S. crops are reaching their peak in-season period, with imports priced at or below the cost of production. In the U.S., cost disparities are largely driven by differences in labor expenses, input costs, and regulatory requirements. U.S. producers face higher costs associated with U.S. environmental, food safety, and labor standards, which further limit their ability to compete with imported products. Without a leveling of the playing field, fruit and vegetable production will continue to shift to foreign countries.”*

*“...These disparities collectively contribute to an ongoing shift in fruit and vegetable production toward foreign suppliers. Due to these factors, we encourage you to consider any trade policies that will protect U.S. fruit and vegetable growers from*

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Continued from previous page: **THE WASHINGTON UPDATE**

*unfair foreign competitors, such as quotas and other tools, as the tariffs alone will not solve the economic decline for our industry.”*

*“We greatly appreciate the opportunity to provide comments to assist in the upcoming USMCA review and encourage you to explore all possible options to provide an effective, near-term relief against unfairly traded Mexican fruits and vegetables threatening the survival of Georgia farm production in our nation. This is an extremely important effort to help ensure the U.S. remains competitive in the fruit and vegetable market, while also providing our citizens with high quality, American-grown food, which is vital to our national security. We look forward to working with USTR on this issue, and any relevant topics in the future.”*

**USTR AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH MEXICO SECRETARY OF ECONOMY**

On January 28, Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Ambassador Jamieson Greer met with Mexican Secretary of Economy Marcelo Ebrard to discuss bilateral trade relations and the upcoming USMCA Joint Review.

A press release from USTR stated: *“Both sides recognized substantial progress in recent months and agreed to continue intensive engagement to address non-tariff barriers. In addition, they agreed to begin formal discussions on possible structural and strategic reforms in the context of the first USMCA Joint Review, including stronger rules of origin for key industrial goods, enhanced collaboration on critical minerals, and increased external trade policy alignment to defend workers and producers in the United States and Mexico and to combat the relentless dumping of manufactured goods in our region.”*

**PRESIDENT TRUMP AND SECRETARY ROLLINS ANNOUNCE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FOR SPECIALTY CROP PRODUCERS**

On December 8, 2025, President Donald Trump and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Rollins announced a new agricultural economic assistance package, totaling \$1 billion for specialty crop producers and others.

Secretary Rollins has stated that they are still working on the specifics of the package for specialty crop producers, including structure, qualifying commodities, and payment rates.

**GFVGA SIGNS ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE LETTER**

On January 15, the Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association joined more than 50 national and state agriculture organizations in sending a letter to congressional leadership, expressing the current economic struggles nationwide and urging congressional action to secure additional economic assistance for growers.

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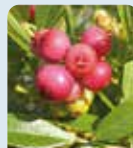
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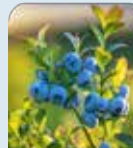
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The letter stated: ***“For the last three to four years the reality of record-high input costs and rapidly declining and historically low crop and specialty crop prices have culminated in many U.S. farmers experiencing negative margins and losses approaching one hundred billion dollars nationwide. At the same time, a widening U.S. agricultural trade deficit and falling American shares of global sales reflect growing competitive pressures in global markets...These trends aren’t just statistics; they represent an economic crisis in rural America.”***

***“We are thankful for USDA’s recent Farmer Bridge Assistance (FBA) program and the promise of some funding for specialty crop and sugar producers. These funds could provide a meaningful first step but do not cover the extensive and cumulative losses that farmers have absorbed over the last several years. Even after including crop insurance, farm bill programs, support from the FBA program, the 2024 Emergency Commodity Assistance Program and the Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops Program, losses for principal crops and specialty crops remain deep. This is why Congress needs to act.”***

***“In addition to continuing to pursue federal policies to increase long-term domestic demand for U.S. agricultural commodities, we urge Congress to provide immediate economic support to fill in the gap of remaining losses for both field and specialty crop farmers. Additional support will stabilize the farm economy, protect rural communities, and ensure a secure food supply. This support must be robust enough to fill in sector-wide gaps.”***

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## **FY26 APPROPRIATIONS AND FARM BILL UPDATE: USDA FULLY FUNDED THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2026**

On November 12, 2025, Congress passed and President Trump signed into law a temporary funding bill, known as a continuing resolution (CR), that will fund federal programs and services through January 30,

2026, and provide funding through the remainder of Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) for programs covered under the Veterans Affairs, Agriculture, and Legislative Branch Appropriations bills. This CR also extends Farm Bill funding and programs that were not included in H.R. 1, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) until September 30, 2026.

U.S. House Agriculture Committee Chairman GT Thompson and U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman John Boozman are still working on the legislation which will include the remainder of typical Farm Bill policies, referring to the bill as “Farm Bill 2.0.” This second piece of Farm Bill legislation may include the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, the Specialty Crop Research Initiative, conservation initiatives, an increase in loan limits, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provisions, rural broadband assistance, permanent commodity program price-support laws, and various regionally specific priorities.

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## **PRODUCERS CAN STILL APPLY FOR AGRICULTURAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE BY APRIL 30, 2026.**

Following the passage of the American Relief Act in early 2025, President Donald Trump and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Brooke Rollins recently announced the Supplemental Disaster Relief Program (SDRP), a two-stage program delivering more than \$16 billion in total Congressionally approved disaster assistance to farmers.

SDRP Stage One, announced in July 2025, remains available to producers who received an indemnity under crop insurance or the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) for eligible crop losses due to qualifying 2023 and 2024 natural disaster events.

SDRP Stage Two, announced in November 2025, remains available for producers with eligible crop, tree, bush and vine losses that were not covered under Stage One program provisions, including non-indemnified (shallow loss), uncovered and quality losses.

[Continued on next page]

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As of January 2026, almost \$6 billion had been disbursed to producers across the country, with Georgia farmers receiving over \$104 million.

Producers can apply for both Stage One and Stage Two assistance until April 30, 2026.

**2025-2030 DIETARY GUIDELINES FOR AMERICANS RELEASED**

On January 7, 2026, the Trump Administration released the 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, following collaborative efforts from U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Brooke Rollins and U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

Updated every five years, this edition emphasizes eating “real,” nutrient-dense foods, prioritizing high-quality proteins, fiber-rich grains, fruits and vegetables, while reducing highly processed foods, refined carbohydrates, and added sugars.

Specifically, the guidelines state, “Vegetables and fruits are essential to real food nutrition. Eat a wide variety of whole, colorful, nutrient-dense vegetables and fruits in their original form, prioritizing freshness and minimal processing.” Additionally, the guidelines recommend Americans consume 3 servings of vegetables and 2 servings of fruits per day.



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