



February 14, 2019

Curt Alt
Director, Programs Division
Foreign Agricultural Service
USDA
1400 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Alt:

The California Cherry Board (CCB) is writing in response to USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service's request for comments regarding the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crop (TASC) program. This request appeared in the December 27, 2019 *Federal Register* (Docket 83 FR 66673).

The CCB represents the growers and packers of all cherry varieties grown in the state of California. Exports have become increasingly important to the California cherry industry. The total value of U.S. cherry exports in 2018 was \$600 million dollars. California cherry exports accounted for \$70 million dollars during this period, or approximately twelve percent of total U.S. cherry exports. Japan, Korea, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Australia are priority markets for the California cherry industry and for the U.S. cherry exports in general.

Keeping these markets open is critical for the California cherry industry. Addressing any pest of concern that may arise is mandatory. Should a quarantine pest be detected in a shipment of cherries to a foreign market, the entire market is likely to close. To stay ahead of this issue, the California cherry industry has used TASC grant funding to conduct research into the latest alternative pest mitigation measures so our growers can continue to export. Without the TASC grant, such important research would not occur.

The California Cherry Board is pleased the TASC program was funded in the latest Farm Bill, and plans to use TASC as needed to address future trade barriers that arise in our export markets. Thank you for consideration of these comments. Please contact me should you have any questions regarding this submission.

Sincerely,

Chris Zanobini
Executive Director
California Cherry Board