Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 21, 2013

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC 20250-0235

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are writing in strong support of the recent request by U.S. cranberry growers in our states for USDA Section 32 purchases of cranberry concentrate and sauce. As a result of the record 2012 North American cranberry harvest, which was 1.2 million barrels larger than last year's harvest, we are deeply concerned about how this will adversely impact cranberry prices in the coming months.

We are also concerned about how the Canadian harvest, which was up 50% over 2011, along with global uncertainty, will impact cranberry exports and continue to put pressure on commodity prices in the coming months. This, coupled with a new Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the EU which favors Canadian cranberry exports, will further impact negatively efforts to reduce the current oversupply.

Based on the industry's economic modeling, which is supported by Cranberry Marketing Committee (CMC) data, it is predicted that cranberry commodity prices could fall below $20 per barrel. More importantly, for almost half of all growers in the United States farm-level prices will be below the cost of production. We ask that you carefully examine the enclosed letter from the U.S. cranberry industry in support of a minimum purchase of 50,000,000 pounds of cranberries. This amount takes into consideration a number of factors including current inventories and supply, new production and yields, and domestic and foreign sales.

As you know, only a handful of states (Wisconsin, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Oregon, and Washington) commercially produce cranberries. In these states, the industry provides significant jobs not only at the farm level but also throughout the rural economy. We look forward to working with you and the Agriculture Marketing Service to ensure the concerns of the industry are given every appropriate consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of assistance in any appropriate way.

Sincerely,

Reid J. Ribble
Member of Congress

William R. Keating
Member of Congress

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