



2023 Legislative Priorities

usapple.org



About USApple

We represent the United States' 26,000 apple growers, nearly 40 state and regional apple associations and more than 3,700 apple-related companies. The U.S. grows more than 10 billion pounds of apples a year on average; the U.S. apple industry supports nearly 150,000 jobs, generating more than \$8 billion in total wages, and is responsible for almost \$23 billion in economic output.

150,000

Jobs

26,000

Apple Growers

3,700

Apple-Related
Companies

\$23B

Economic
Output

10B

Pounds A Year
On Average

\$8B

Total Wages

40

State & Regional
Apple Associations

MISSION

USApple's mission is to advocate for American apple growers and their industry partners on national issues in order to promote the profitable production and marketing of apples and apple products. The association unites a diverse industry to achieve these three primary goals:

- Represent the entire industry on national issues;
- Increase demand for apples and apple products; and
- Provide information on matters pertaining to the apple industry.

MEMBERSHIP

USApple's members include the following state apple associations, representing apple growers throughout the country, as well as regional apple associations and individual firms involved in the apple business.

- California Apple Commission
- Colorado Apple Admin. Committee
- Connecticut Apple Marketing Board
- Georgia Fruit Growers
- Idaho Apple Commission
- Illinois State Horticultural Society
- Indiana Horticultural Society
- Maine Apple Marketing Committee
- Maryland Apple Promotion Board
- Massachusetts Fruit Growers Assoc.
- Michigan Apple Committee
- Minnesota Apple Growers Assoc.
- Missouri State Horticultural Society
- New England Apple Association
- New Hampshire Fruit Growers Assoc.
- New Jersey Apple Industry Council
- New Mexico Apple Commission
- New York Apple Association
- North Carolina Apple Growers Assoc.
- Ohio Apple Marketing Program
- Oregon – Hood River Grower-Shipper Assoc.
- Pennsylvania Apple Program
- Utah Apple Marketing Board
- Vermont Tree Fruit Growers Assoc.
- Virginia Apple Growers Assoc.
- Washington Apple Commission
- West Virginia Horticultural Society
- Wisconsin Apple Growers Assoc.

Agriculture Labor Reform

Apple production – growing harvesting, and packing – is highly labor intensive. The apple industry is heavily dependent on migrant labor, H-2A and H-2B workers to grow, harvest, pack and process apples and apple products.

Every year, growers from coast-to-coast, large and small, report worker shortages. The result has been uncertainty as to whether there will be sufficient and dependable labor to harvest the crop or expand operations.

In response to these labor uncertainties, more apple growers have turned to the H-2A agricultural guestworker program. The H-2A program is complicated, expensive, and subject to delay, but the need is so great that the number of H-2A workers has quadrupled in the past ten years. That trend continues, much of it being driven by the apple industry. This increase has added to existing capacity problems at the Departments of Labor, State and Homeland Security and, consequently, workers continue to be delayed. For a perishable crop like apples, the delay of even a few days can make the difference between a profit and a loss.

A stable, legal and reliable workforce is critical if we are to continue to have a vibrant, domestic apple industry. Mandatory E-Verify without broader reforms would have a devastating effect on the industry. Therefore, passing legislative reforms that address both the current and future flow of workers is the industry's top priority.

Every farm worker engaged in high-value, labor-intensive crop production sustains three or more local, off-farm (but agricultural dependent), year-round jobs. Losing our foreign-born workforce would have the same economic impact on these communities as factories closed and moved overseas.

USApple supported the bipartisan Farm Workforce Modernization Act which passed the House in 2019 and 2021. The process must now start anew. USApple urges the House and the Senate to forge bipartisan and bicameral agreement.

USApple is very concerned with recent regulatory changes and proposals which will further increase the cost and administrative burdens of the H-2A program.



USApple Position:

USApple opposes enforcement-only legislation, such as E-Verify, unless it contains viable agricultural labor provisions that address both the current and future workforce.

USApple urges Congress to pass legislation that provides meaningful agricultural labor reform and meets the following objectives:

1. Provides a stable, adequate and predictable supply of agricultural labor capable of participating legally in the U.S. workforce;
2. Significantly reforms the H-2A program; and
3. Addresses the unsustainable escalation of mandated guest worker wage rates and simplifies and provides legal reform to remove unreasonable employer sanctions and regulatory burdens.

Crop Protection

USApple supports a strong, science-based, regulatory approach to crop protection chemical registration.

Apple growers have adopted programs such as Integrated Pest Management, Integrated Resistance Management, and other technology to minimize the use of pesticides. However, the continued availability of effective and affordable agricultural chemicals is critical to the success of the industry in controlling more than 100 species of insects and diseases.

Continued funding for the following programs is needed to produce reliable data and support that helps to ensure pesticide availability for apple growers:

- National Agricultural Statistics Service chemical use surveys. These surveys provide vital information for registered crop protection chemicals and their environmental evaluation.
- Pesticide Data Program (PDP), administered by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service used

by EPA to prepare realistic pesticide dietary exposures for pesticide registration activities.

- Office of Pest Management Policy, which develops and coordinates USDA policy on pesticides.
- IR-4 (minor-use registration of crop protection tools), administered by the National Institute for Food and Agriculture. Without IR-4, apple growers would have fewer crop protection compounds. IR-4 scientists generate the data necessary for the registration of compounds for use on apples and other minor/specialty crops.

USApple Position:

USApple urges full funding for the above programs to ensure adequate data and support for science-based pesticide registration decisions for the apple industry.

Research

For the apple industry, research and extension activities supported by the USDA enable introduction of new cultivars, fight invasive pests and diseases, implement improved pest management strategies develop sustainable production practices and science-based food safety initiatives.

- **The Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI)**
The critical value of the SCRI can be illustrated by two of the many important research efforts: 1) the Spotted Lanternfly Project and 2) the Brown Marmorated Stink Bug Project that have prevented the loss of tens of millions of dollars of specialty crops. Specific projects with multi-state and multi-institutional impact include development of new Integrated Pest Management practices to enhance workplace safety and reduce environmental impact (Calif., Mich., Ore., Utah, Wash.) and application of modern genomics and genetic technologies to create apple cultivars with consumer-preferred traits (Ark., Calif., Fla., Mich., Minn., N.Y., Texas, S.C., Wash.).

- **Geneva Apple Rootstock Breeding Program**
Growers and consumers nationwide benefit greatly from improved disease resistance and increased productivity provided by new rootstock varieties. Research is being conducted in the following states - Calif., Idaho, Maine, Mass., Md., Mich., N.C., N.J., N.Y., Ohio, Ore., Pa., Utah, Va., W.Va and Wash.

- **The National Clean Plant Network**
The National Clean Plant Network (NCPN) protects U.S. specialty crops, including apples, from the spread of plant pests and diseases. The tree fruit, grape, and nursery industries rely on the NCPN as the single, nationally-certified source of plant material free of potentially devastating diseases.

USApple Position:

USApple urges Congress to fully fund these vital USDA research programs.



Farm Bill

The U.S. apple industry believes federal agricultural policy should encourage competitiveness through private investment, opportunities to increase profitability in the marketplace and incentives for growers who are committed to better serving consumer needs.

USApple is a founding member of the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance. The SCFBA successfully advocated for specialty crop programs in the 2008, 2014 and 2018 Farm Bills and is now working to build on those accomplishments in the 2023 Farm Bill. USApple and the SCFBA oppose any attempt to expand the definition of specialty crops beyond that established in the Specialty Crop Competitiveness Act of 2004.

USApple strongly supports maintaining and expanding key Farm Bill programs, including:

- Research – The Specialty Crop Research Initiative, which is used to combat pests and disease and develop automation technology.
- International Trade – The Market Access Program and the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops.
- State Block Grants – Specialty Crop Block Grants, targeted to local needs, can be used on a variety of priorities, including marketing, food safety and nutrition initiatives.
- Crop Insurance – Federal crop insurance programs including traditional, whole farm and the Tree Assistance Program, provide a critical lifeline for the industry as extreme weather events are becoming commonplace.
- Nutrition – The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program has proven successful in increasing consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables by elementary school students in low-income schools. Commodity purchase programs should be improved, and incentive programs expanded.
- Buy American – Though schools are required to purchase domestic commodities and products, imported products, including apple juice, routinely reach schools. Congress should strengthen and require USDA to enforce the Buy American requirements in USDA school meals programs.
- Clean Plant Network – Establishing a network of clean plant centers to ensure nurseries can continue to provide safe, virus-free plant materials for orchards.

USApple Position:

USApple urges Congress to maintain and improve specialty crop programs in the 2023 Farm Bill.

International Trade

Historically, about one-third of the apple crop has been destined for export with a value of about \$1 billion. However, the combination of retaliatory tariffs, the lack of new trade agreements and a strong dollar have decreased U.S. apple exports by 25% since 2018.

Maintaining competitiveness through international trade is a top policy priority for the U.S. Apple Association and our members. While not all growers export, everyone's prices are affected by exports, so trade is critical to the healthy future of the entire industry.

MARKET-OPENING TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

India had risen to the number two export market in 2018, but 70% retaliatory tariffs eliminated that market at a cost to the industry of \$500 million in lost sales.

Similarly, the apple industry gained market access to China in 2014. Growth was almost immediate, and China quickly rose to be a top market. Again, retaliatory tariffs in 2018 stalled growth and resulted in market loss.

USApple urges the Biden Administration to engage in negotiations with India and China to reopen the market for apples.

Negotiations and future trade deals must consider non-tariff trade barriers, which the industry faces in many of these markets. This is particularly true in Japan, the EU and the UK.

MONITORING EU REQUEST FOR EXPANDED ACCESS TO U.S. MARKET

Dating back to the Obama Administration, EU officials have consistently prioritized expedited access to the U.S. market for their apples and pears. USApple has raised scientific concerns with this request. Of particular concern is the inclusion of Poland in the EU request. Unlike the other EU countries, Poland does not currently have access to the U.S. market because a

formal pest risk assessment has never been conducted. USApple conveyed these scientific concerns to the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service in 2016 but never received satisfactory answers.

Adding to our concerns, the EU is not a reciprocal market. U.S. apples have extremely limited access to the market due to the EU's hazard-based pesticide policies which are not grounded in science. Bottom line, if we don't have access to their market, they should not be given expedited access to ours.

USApple Position:

USApple urges fair trade policies where U.S. growers have equal access to foreign markets before the U.S. grants access to our markets.

USApple supports a science-based system for decisions regarding the importation of apples into the U.S. as the best defense against allowing foreign pests or disease threats to enter this country and jeopardize U.S. apple production.

USDA MARKET ACCESS PROGRAM

In FY 2022, the apple industry received more than \$5.5 million in export market development funds from USDA's Market Access Program (MAP). These funds are matched by grower dollars to promote apples in more than 25 countries throughout the world. Funding for MAP has not increased in nearly twenty years. In that time, fully one-third of MAP funding has been lost to sequestration, inflation, and program administration. The bipartisan and bicameral Expanding Agricultural Exports Act would double MAP funding.

USApple Position:

USApple urges Congress to pass H.R. 648 and S.176, the Expanding Agricultural Exports Act.

CONTACT US

For more information about USApple and our activities on behalf of America's apple industry, please contact Diane Kurrle, Senior Vice President, at (703) 442-8850, or visit us at USApple.org. Follow us @usapples.



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