

PRESS RELEASE**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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New Farm Bill Passes Congress*Horticulture Title, a Main Focus of AmericanHort, Receives 75% in Additional Funding*

Washington, D.C. – Yesterday (February 4th), the U.S. Senate voted to pass the Agricultural Act of 2014, also known as the Farm Bill, by a vote of 68-32. This follows last week's approval by the U.S. House of Representatives. The bill now heads to the President for signature, expected later this week.

“The new Farm Bill speaks to our nation’s agricultural priorities and it is encouraging to see horticulture, including nursery and greenhouse crops, gaining in importance and support,” said Michael Geary, President and CEO of AmericanHort. “Strengthening federal funding opportunities for horticulture in research, pest management, and marketing doesn’t just happen by accident. AmericanHort’s professional staff and our dedicated members helped drive those conversations in Washington D.C. and to ensure that our industry’s needs are met.”

The five-year Farm Bill, over 900 pages, addresses many program areas ranging from conservation and nutrition, to crop insurance and energy production from biomass. The new Farm Bill contains more than \$16 billion in cuts and budget savings.

For horticulture – which includes fruits, vegetables, nuts, nursery and floriculture production, and Christmas trees – the programs of greatest importance have all received substantial increases, totaling more than \$1.1 billion over the next five years. These programs focus on specialty crop research needs, environmental management, and prevention and response to new pest and plant disease challenges. In the recent past, such funds have been essential to our industry’s response to emerging threats like boxwood blight, impatiens downy mildew, *Phytophthora ramorum*, the cause of sudden oak death, and where we will likely look for support to answer important science questions on rose rosette disease.

Specialty Crop Block Grants will now, for the first time, be available for multi-state coordinated projects, expanding the opportunities for our state and regional industry association partners to work together on marketing efforts and other needs, which also benefits garden retailers. “Promotional campaigns like Plant Something (www.plant-something.org) help to unite and strengthen all aspects of our industry, including breeding and growing, distribution, garden retail, and landscape services,” said AmericanHort senior vice president Craig Regelbrugge. “Research assists our producers in delivering high quality products to our retailers and marketing programs help consumers better understand the important economic and environmental benefits our plants and services mean to them and their communities,” added Regelbrugge.

The National Clean Plant Network (NCPN) program is strengthened with both funding and technical fixes AmericanHort worked to secure. NCPN has become a cornerstone element of industry efforts to import clean plant material for trialing and development by our fruit tree and nut tree growers,” said AmericanHort’s regulatory and legislative director Joe Bischoff. These growers have significant regulatory and pest management challenges, from viruses in particular, and the clean plant centers at Washington State University at Prosser, University of California at Davis, and Clemson University, are vital to delivering new varieties and cultivars to help this segment of our industry thrive. “The new language significantly advances what NCPN will be capable of and improves its outlook for long-term stability,” added Bischoff.

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AmericanHort was formed in 2014 by the consolidation of the American Nursery & Landscape Association and OFA – The Association of Horticulture Professionals. AmericanHort represents the whole of the plant industry, including breeders, greenhouse and nursery growers, garden retailers, distributors, interior and exterior landscape professionals, florists, students, educators, researchers, manufacturers, and all of those who are part of the industry supply chain. The mission of AmericanHort is to unite, promote, and advance the horticulture industry through advocacy, collaboration, connectivity, education, market development, and research. The association has offices in Columbus, Ohio for administration and member services, and in Washington, DC to facilitate government relations and research activities.