



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **ALLIANCE FORMS TO URGE AGRICULTURAL TRADE REFORM**

A broad coalition of U.S. agricultural groups has formed to press for the needs of fruit, vegetable and nut farmers during global trade negotiations.

Horticultural Organizations for Responsible Trade, known as the HORT Alliance, will be represented at a World Trade Organization ministerial meeting next week in Cancun, Mexico. The alliance will seek “aggressive and meaningful reform” of policies governing trade of fruits, vegetables and nuts.

The alliance is composed of 19 statewide, regional and national organizations. The member groups include both general farm organizations and associations that represent growers and marketers of specific fruits, vegetables and nuts.

In a letter to U.S. Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick, the alliance promised to work with American negotiators to address trade disparities that harm U.S. horticultural producers.

“U.S. fruit and vegetable exports are not subsidized. However, many of our trading partners still protect their markets by maintaining high tariffs on horticultural imports, while others subsidize the production and/or the export of certain fruits and vegetables,” the letter said.

“Most horticultural products or specialty crops enter the United States duty-free or with only minimal tariffs,” said California Farm Bureau Federation President Bill Pauli. “But U.S. farmers trying to sell similar products overseas can face tariffs ranging from 30 percent up to 80 percent. American specialty-crop farmers need a world trade agreement that, at a minimum, harmonizes tariffs near the low, U.S. levels.”

The HORT Alliance supports “significant reform” of such market-access rules. It also seeks new WTO rules to restrict how much a government may provide a trade-distorting subsidy to any particular horticultural or specialty crop.

“Some countries, particularly the European Union and, to a lesser extent, Japan, provide their horticultural producers with internal supports that distort trade,” said California Tomato Commission President Ed Beckman. “The HORT Alliance supports aggressive reform in trade-distorting internal support payments.”

The alliance also supports immediate elimination of export subsidies for horticultural and specialty-crop products.

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“Most countries, including the U.S., do not provide any trade-distorting export subsidies for fruits, vegetables or nuts,” said Ohio Farm Bureau Federation President Terry McClure. “The European Union, on the other hand, budgeted the equivalent of \$38 million to subsidize fresh fruit and vegetable exports. The use of export subsidies provides the EU with a competitive advantage.”

If the WTO agrees on agricultural trade rules that do not address horticultural or specialty-crop concerns aggressively enough, the HORT Alliance says it will likely request a special initiative to focus on horticultural-specific interests in a “sectoral agreement” that goes beyond the general, agricultural trade framework.

Founding members of the HORT Alliance include California Apple Commission, California Cherry Export Association, California Farm Bureau Federation, California Grape and Tree Fruit League, California Minor Crops Council, California Pear Advisory Board, California Strawberry Commission, California Table Grape Commission, California Tomato Commission, California Walnut Commission, Cherry Marketing Institute, Florida Tomato Exchange, Imperial Valley Vegetable Growers Association, Michigan Farm Bureau, New York Farm Bureau Inc., Ohio Farm Bureau Federation, Oregon Farm Bureau Federation, Prune Bargaining Association and Sunkist Growers.

Lisa Dillabo, California Farm Bureau Federation director of international trade and horticultural crops, serves as coordinator of the alliance.

For more information about the alliance, visit its Web site at [www.hortalliance.com](http://www.hortalliance.com).

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