

Economic Relief for Blueberry Growers

⚠️ The Situation

Blueberry farmers are facing a critical economic moment. Years of rising input and labor costs and repeated natural disasters have placed enormous strain on farms — yet specialty crop producers are routinely left out of traditional farm safety net programs designed for commodity crops.

Recent data confirms the severity of the challenge:

- A report by the *American Farm Bureau Federation* found that higher labor, input, and packing costs are outpacing pricing gains, leaving many blueberry growers unable to recover their long-run economic costs.
- A recent *Michigan State University* cost-of-production study shows that **the average blueberry farm is barely breaking even.**

Many growers are covering short-term operating expenses but falling short of achieving long-term economic viability.

✅ The Request

Congress must pass a supplemental funding package that provides **no less than \$5 billion for specialty crops.** Any aid package for agriculture should set aside not less than 1/3 of total funds for specialty crop producers.

To ensure the program works effectively for growers, key elements from prior successful specialty crop assistance programs should be incorporated:

- Payment limitations of not less than \$900,000
- Exemption from AGI limitations if at least 75% of income is derived from farming activities
- Payments calculated based on a grower's individual aggregate specialty crop receipts (sales or revenue)
- Allow growers to select a base year from at least three predetermined years
- Require minimal paperwork and allow self-attestation under penalty of perjury (subject to audit)

💡 Why It Matters

Blueberry farms need targeted economic support now. Additional aid will keep family farms in business, sustain rural jobs, preserve domestic production, and preserve nutrition securing through American-grown specialty crops.

The Broader Specialty Crop Context

Specialty crop operations **contribute more than \$75 billion annually** in cash receipts to the U.S. economy and account for more than one-third of all crop sales nationwide.

Yet, out of the recently announced \$12 billion Farmer Bridge Program, **only \$1 billion has been reserved for specialty crops** through the Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers (ASCF) and other crops not included in the original list of 13 program commodities.

This amount of funding **does not** reflect the scale, value, or economic stress facing the specialty crop sector.

Congressional action will help ensure specialty crop producers receive fair and meaningful support during this period of economic strain.