

I am Jennifer Euwer, a fruit grower in the Hood River Valley. My husband, Steve Hunt, and I farm a total of 240 acres of pears and cherries. My family has grown pears in Oregon since 1912, with the Red Anjou variety being initially discovered in one of our orchards.

I appreciate this opportunity to provide comments about the importance of several components of the 2007 Farm Bill.

The 2007 Farm Bill provides an excellent opportunity to bring agricultural policy in line with Federal health and nutrition recommendations. A strong fruit and vegetable agricultural policy will benefit tree-fruit growers while at the same time making it easier for Americans to benefit from consuming a diet rich in a variety of fruits and vegetables. A diet that has been shown to reduce heart disease, diabetes, and cancer, as well as helping people maintain a healthy weight.

The 2005 Dietary Guidelines, issued jointly by USDA and the Department of Health and Human Services, recommend that all Americans eat 5 to 13 servings of fruits and vegetables a day. These guidelines are the strongest statement ever about the need to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables, recommending that Americans double their consumption of produce.

For children, making fruits and vegetables more readily available in locations where kids spend a lot of their time, such as in schools, is one of the most effective means of increasing their consumption of produce. I have been frustrated not only as an agricultural producer, but also as a parent by the lack of fresh fruits and vegetables in public school lunches.

I believe that the upcoming Farm Bill should include language to expand the successful fresh fruit and vegetable snack program to all 50 states, including Oregon, and to double funding for the Department of Defense's Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program for schools.

There are many reasons for expanding the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program to all 50 States, such as the increase in overall consumption by kids and the immediate behavior change, but I would like to offer you some first hand experience about how the pilot program benefited the children, but also added to the health of an industry. It turned out, based on the USDA's review of the program, that pears were the fourth most popular fruit purchased by the schools following apples, bananas and citrus. This is a very good showing as pears come in about 8th in a typical U.S. retail produce department sales ranking.

Another interesting fact from USDA's evaluation was that pears were the most popular "never before tried fruit". One of the beautiful things about this program is that it gives children a chance not only to have more fruits and vegetables around to help them make better food choices, it also exposes them to new varieties of produce that they may never have seen or had an opportunity to try before. It is important for people to eat a variety of fruit and vegetables including the pears and cherries that I grow, and this program gets kids started on that road early in life.

Expanding the snack program to all 50 states, including Oregon, would go a long way to promoting the health of the nation's school children as well as improving the health of the nation's fruit and vegetable farmers.

USDA's Market Access Program (MAP) is another initiative that deserves to be fully funded in the new Farm Bill. It benefits growers and allows for USA Pears or other U.S. agricultural products to be more competitive in overseas markets. By helping expand the USA Pear exports, the MAP program helps stimulate more demand and, therefore, stronger overall returns for my fellow pear growers and me. With the help of the MAP funded promotional activities, U.S. pear exports have established a record value in each of the past 7 seasons. The 2005-06 season is expected to establish a new record of \$119 million.

Our growers' promotion arm, the Pear Bureau Northwest, has participated in the MAP program since its inception and U.S. pear exports during that time have risen from 1 million 44 lb boxes to over 5 million boxes on average the past 5 seasons. Prior to the inception of the MAP, only 10 percent of the crop was exported. Today that percentage is closer to 35 percent. In 1985, the USA Pear growers were exporting to 25 countries and the Pear Bureau had promotional programs in 12 countries. Today the Pear Bureau has promotional programs in 38 markets and the industry is exporting USA Pears to over 55 markets. This growth in the importance of the export markets for the USA Pear industry is directly linked to the success of MAP and our industry's good working relationship with USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS).

For a single export market, Mexico is the industry's best success story and exemplifies the positive benefit of the MAP program. Since the start of our industry's work with FAS, exports to Mexico have increased 978 percent. Today, Mexico is the industry's top export market and the MAP funded activities have helped develop that market from a low-grade, small-size export market in the years prior to NAFTA to an export market that is now nearly 40 percent of our total exports. Mexico has also grown to become a diverse export market, which imports a range of sizes, varieties and grades. Currently exports have averaged around 2.8 million boxes after reaching a high of 3.2 million boxes in 2001-02. The MAP funded activities, such as in-store sampling promotions, have allowed consumers to taste new varieties, which have led to increased shipments of different pear varieties to Mexico. Mexico now is one of the top export destinations for Green Anjou, Bartlett and Bosc pears and is an emerging market for Red Anjous. The advertising efforts have increased the exposure of USA Pears and the overall consumer awareness levels. Consumer research has shown that consumers have become more familiar with USA Pears, are eating more of them, are familiar with the ripening process and all this is attributed to the MAP funded activities in Mexico.

I see the MAP program as a vital part of the upcoming Farm Bill and something that is ideally suited to support high-value products such as pears and cherries and maintain the export competitiveness of U.S. products. I believe that this program should be fully supported by Congress. It is a program that benefits the growers and, according to a FAS cost benefit analysis study on the MAP program, it is very good use of federal resources and brings a positive benefit to the overall economy.

Agricultural research funding at both land grant institutions and USDA's Agricultural Research Service should also be a major focus of the next Farm Bill. We need advances in technology, especially labor saving devices, if we are to remain competitive on a world market.

Because our U.S. growers have a far higher cost of labor, and face more stringent and costly

environmental standards---as opposed to those in other producing countries---it is extremely difficult for them to compete with foreign imports. For many reasons, including, I believe, national security, it should be our nation's policy to do what we can to keep agriculture viable in our county, now and in the future. For that to happen we have to act NOW to ensure that the land where we grow fresh produce---what I call "High Vitamin value" land, stays in agricultural production. This is the very land most in danger of development, because it is so close to more densely populated areas. (Higher value crops meant smaller sized farms, which led to denser populations where fresh produce was grown, even as the country was originally settled.)

The only realistic way I can see to keep our fruit growers farming is to create an environment conducive to their profitability. Fully funding MAP to help our exports; expanding produce consumption through good and extensive nutrition programs; and providing for increased agricultural research funding are three specific policy objectives I think Congress should achieve during its work on the next Farm Bill.

More detailed and varied recommendations on the 2007 Farm Bill will be made in the coming months by groups such as the United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association and the Northwest Horticultural Council. I urge this committee to take these recommendations, when made, into full account.

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I am now happy to answer any questions.