

MIKE THOMPSON
4TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

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October 21, 2026

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Rollings:

I am writing regarding the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) October 19, 2026 announcement of \$8 billion in assistance through the Harvest Fuel Relief (HRF) Program to seek clarification on how specialty crop producers will be able to access this funding and to urge USDA to ensure that all agricultural producers receive equitable assistance.

Farmers across my district are facing significant financial pressures from rising fuel costs, increased production expenses, and continued market uncertainties. These challenges are particularly acute for specialty crop producers, including the growers of fruits, vegetables, nuts, and winegrapes who are essential to the California agricultural economy. While I appreciate the recognition of the need for additional assistance, it is critical that specialty crop producers are not once again left receiving disproportionately less assistance than other agricultural producers.

Earlier this year, USDA provided assistance to specialty crop growers through the Assistance for Specialty Crops Farmers program, following the announcement of the Farmer Bridge Assistance (FBA) Program. Unfortunately, the funding made available to specialty crop producers was insufficient to address the significant financial challenges facing these operations. Many specialty crop growers face substantially higher per-acre production costs than traditional commodity producers. The assistance provided did not adequately reflect these costs or the economic losses these producers have experienced.

USDA's announcement indicates that payment rates for Title I commodities will be released in November, while the methodology for other eligible commodities will be announced at a later date. I am concerned that this approach could once again leave specialty crop producers with uncertainty about whether they will receive meaningful assistance and how that assistance will compare with payments to other producers.

Specialty crop growers deserve the same consideration and equitable access to federal assistance as producers of traditional row crops. While payment rates should account for differences in

production costs and economic losses across commodities, no producer should receive less adequate compensation simply because of the type of crop they grow.

I strongly urge USDA to provide clear guidance to specialty crop producers as soon as possible and ensure that funding is distributed fairly across the agricultural industry. Relief should be based on the actual financial challenges facing farmers, not on whether they grow a traditional commodity or a specialty crop.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike Thompson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mike" and last name "Thompson" clearly distinguishable.

MIKE THOMPSON
Member of Congress