

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Calls on USDA to support Wisconsin cranberry growers amidst coronavirus pandemic

Posted on Wednesday, Apr 15, 2020

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin, Co-Chair of the Congressional Cranberry Caucus, is urging the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide direct financial assistance to Wisconsin cranberry growers and make purchases of surplus cranberry products. These purchases would provide nutritious products to families in need by utilizing tools provided to USDA in the bipartisan CARES Act. Swift action now can help provide food to our food pantries and help our agriculture economy get through the coronavirus pandemic.

In her letter to Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, Senator Baldwin urges USDA to utilize all available programs and authorities to enable Wisconsin cranberry growers to weather these tough challenges.

Baldwin writes, *“Affecting cranberry growers from coast-to-coast, the sudden and unpredictable closure of food-service businesses combined with government-issued stay-at-home orders have heightened the stress of an already challenging business environment. The growing season is now upon us, and some seasonal farm workers that cranberry growers rely on were unable to return to cranberry marshes due to travel restrictions. Many growers would like to immediately hire unemployed members of their community to replace them, but they do not have sufficient funds immediately available to do so. Small growers are especially hard hit because many of these families have unexpectedly lost their non-agricultural income, which was critical for their cash flow. The loss of this additional income leaves many of these growers and their businesses on the brink of collapse.”*

She continues, *“Consumption of cranberry products away from home has fallen by sixty percent since the onset of the pandemic, and prolonged severe economic damage will continue to affect cranberry consumption in the months and years to come. This economic fallout comes on the heels of years of significant losses in cranberry export markets due to retaliatory tariffs, which have undermined relationships with large overseas buyers that were developed over many years. Prior to the onset of retaliatory tariffs, China was the largest overseas buyer of cranberries, purchasing \$55 million of product annually. The global pandemic now means prolonged export market closures during the year when cranberry growers were optimistic about rebuilding relationships with international customers.”*

Baldwin concludes, *“There are numerous challenges facing cranberry growers at this time, and they cannot weather them alone. Please use the funds provided by Congress to directly assist cranberry growers during this incredibly challenging time. These family farms play a critical role in providing Americans healthy food and driving our rural economy. We request that you provide these hardworking growers the resources they need to keep their businesses running so they can continue to contribute to our nation’s productivity and wellbeing for generations to come.”*

The full letter is available [here](#).

An online version of this release is available [here](#).

###