



**NORTHARVEST BEAN GROWERS ASSOCIATION**

*Supplying the World With Dry Beans.*

July 26, 2005

To: USDA Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns

Regarding: USDA Farm Bill Forum, Minot, ND

From: Northharvest Bean Growers Association (3,000 producer members)

### **Farm Program on the Front Lines**

#### **Issue Summary:**

- Dry Beans are a non-program crop and receive no government subsidy.
- Dry Beans are currently listed under the fruits and vegetable section of the Farm Program.
- Recent WTO Cotton Case and in a pending trade scrap, Brazil may fight US Farm Bill and declare the operational rules of US programs (no fruit and vegetable planting rule) as illegal due to its design. Restricting the planting of dry beans on program acres has put unfair pressure on producing subsidized crops like cotton.

### **Foreign Imports of Dry Beans**

#### **Issue Summary:**

- Export markets are declining because of the strong US dollar and increase global competition from countries such as China, Canada and Burma. US imports of these same beans are now estimated to supply 1/5 of our domestic usage. These beans could be mis-identified as US produced and our food safety standards could be at jeopardy. These imported beans must be held to the same regulations as those that are produced here.

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## **Agriculture Research Service Bean Appropriation**

### **Issue Summary:**

- US grown dry beans are a dry stored nutritious food source used in cultures around the globe.
- For the dry bean industry to remain competitive, nationally and internationally, and to be prepared for newly emerging diseases or nutrition based needs, the industry requires a commitment by USDA's Agriculture Research (ARS) to increase the national dry bean research effort.

## **Federal Crop Insurance**

### **Issue Summary:**

- With general plight of agriculture and the related low prices of virtually all commodities, "Cost of Production Insurance" would give dry bean producers a safety net of up to 100 percent of the documented costs of production.
- This would be an effective insurance program, with growers paying a discounted premium based on their desired level of protection.
- We would request that at an absolute minimum, no cuts be made to the Federal Crop Insurance program.

## **U.S. Food Exports to Cuba**

### **Issue Summary:**

- The dry bean industry would benefit from increased liberalization of U.S. sanctions against selling food to Cuba. It is estimated that the industry could recover export sales of more than 10 million dollars in a relatively short period if U.S. financing under the current allowances for food and medicine was allowed.
- Furthermore, having to use foreign financial institutions simply encourages Cuban buyers to do business elsewhere.
- In the impact on the U.S. Economy of Lifting The Food and Medical Embargo on Cuba, lists dry beans as one of the top nine agricultural products to benefit from liberalized trade policies with Cuba.

## **Food Aid Program**

### **Issue Summary:**

- Sixteen million metric tons of food are needed per year to meet the minimum food assistance requirements of the 60 poorest countries in the world. To meet these minimum humanitarian need the Dry Bean Industry urges full funding of food aid program - specifically the PL 480 Title II, USDA Food for Progress Programs and the Global Food for Education Initiative.