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Subject: Vineyard issues for 07 Farm Bill
Date Sent: 11/10/2005 07:08:33 CST
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Greetings Mr. Johanns,
Our family farm is a 3rd generation, 1600 acre grain and hay operation here on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. As I'm sure you are aware, the Delmarva Peninsula is some of the Eastern seaboard's last remaining open space with highly productive agriculture. The development pressures on farmers in this region are huge.

As a means to diversify and help improve profitability, our farm planted a small 3-acre vineyard since the Maryland wine industry is growing. There are not enough in-state commercial sized vineyards to meet winery demand for grapes without having to purchase out of state.

Because of 2002 Farm Bill restrictions on fruit and vegetable allocations, we are unable to enlarge our vineyard. As grain farmers, we do not have a "history" of growing fruits or vegetables and are therefore restricted from being able to diversify into these crops. This fall, off of our 3-acre vineyard, we harvested over 6 tons of winegrapes, which is pretty significant for the first year's harvest.

We would like to see the restrictions on fruit and vegetable allocations based on "history" eliminated in the 2007 Farm Bill. The ability to diversify is crucial for us. Grapes are a value-added crop generating more income per acre than any grains we grow. The only other crop that generates more income per acre is hay.

As we struggle to stay in business, we need to be able to diversify our farm. Undue restrictions on fruit and vegetable allocations means we may be forced into the only other crop which we'd prefer not to grow..... houses.

Thanks for your time and consideration.
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