



PO Box 116, Wenatchee, WA 98807-0116 509-662-7164 [todd@c-onursery.com](mailto:todd@c-onursery.com)

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November 3, 2005

Michael Johanns,  
Secretary of Agriculture  
US Department of Agriculture  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Johanns:

Plum pox virus eradication efforts in Pennsylvania cost federal and state agencies over 50 million dollars to date. That same money would more than adequately fund preventative programs for such outbreaks for decades. We believe that it would be prudent for the Department of Agriculture to establish and support such a program. Such preventative programs that certify pathogen-free planting stock are the foundation for controlling pathogens that are spread through such stock.

Production of certified planting stock in this country is a cooperative effort between growers, nurseries, state departments of agriculture, land grant universities and the federal government. Growers themselves contribute over 2.7 million annually for the operation of these programs. Federal funds contribute another quarter of million each year. Unfortunately, the federal level of contribution has been static for 10 years and is scheduled to terminate in the next couple of years. We believe that the federal government needs to stay active in this arena. The government funds help stabilize and secure the keystone projects of the certification scheme and provide a third party unbiased perspective in the testing.

We joined with the grapevine and nut tree industries to promote a pathogen free program initiative. It is called the National Clean Plant Network. This network is considered a high priority by the National Grape and Wine Initiative, the Tree Fruit Technology Roadmap, and the National Berry Crop Initiative. Legislators from key states have voiced their support of the effort. Within the Department of Agriculture, Tom Bewick, National Program Leader, Horticulture, USDA-CSREES, is coordinating strategies for securing funding for this project.

Beyond the need for this program that helps prevent severe economic outbreaks of high impact diseases, the general standard of trees for planting is improved substantially by such projects. Economic studies conducted at Washington State University show that these clean stock programs potentially contribute over \$27,000,000 annually to the country's economy in the form of reduced grower losses and increased availability of fresh fruit for the consumer. Please work diligently to establish the proposed clean plant network within the Department of Agriculture.

Kindest Regards,

Todd Snyder  
C & O Nursery, owner

Northwest Nursery Improvement Institute President

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SECRETARIAT, USDA

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