SUN-MAID
The World's Favorite

Sun-Maid Growers of California

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July 17, 2006

Mr. A.G. Kawamura
Secretary
California Department of Food and Agriculture
1220 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: California Department of Food & Agriculture
2007: A 21st Century Farm Bill
The California Perspective
Listening Session - Fresno

Dear Secretary Kawamura and panel members:

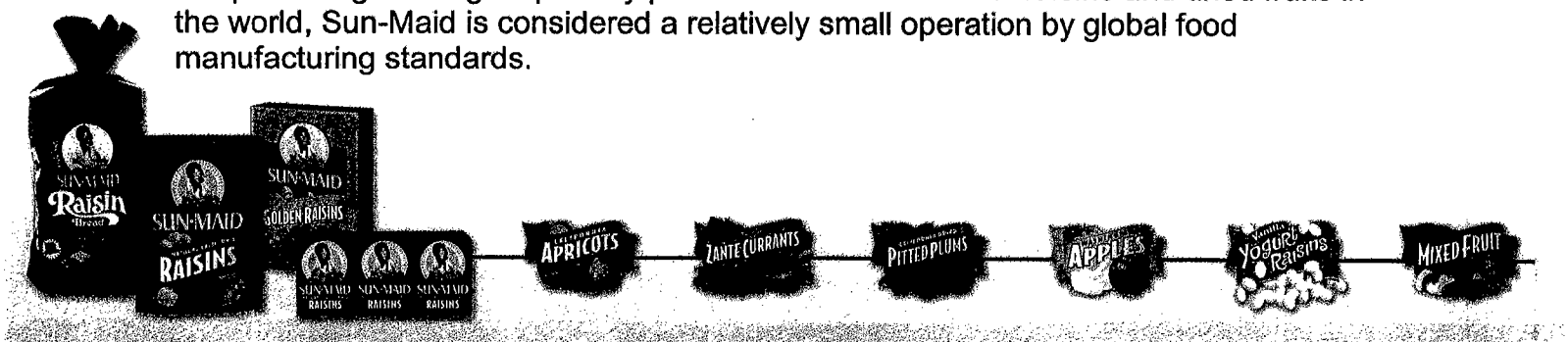
Sun-Maid Growers of California is an agricultural marketing cooperative which is owned and operated for the benefit of 1,000 raisin grape family farmers, all located in the heart of California. We have been in business since 1912, which is two years before the establishment of a national agricultural extension service.

As you are aware, California is the largest raisin producing area in the world, and is the world's largest producer of almonds, walnuts and prunes.

Raisins, dried fruits and nuts are Non-Program crops and receive no production subsidies. These are high value healthy foods. Health professionals around the world encourage shifting food consumption to fruits and vegetables. In fact, a little red box of raisins is now included in the U.S.D.A. Food Pyramid, released last year on April 19, 2005.

Like similar California based specialty crop operations, our primary business is to provide safe reliable food products for U.S. consumers while trying to also serve key international customers in over 30 countries around the world.

Despite being the largest primary processor and marketer of raisins and dried fruits in the world, Sun-Maid is considered a relatively small operation by global food manufacturing standards.



Future prosperity and success of California specialty crop agriculture needs the reallocation of resources by the U.S. government particularly within U.S.D.A.

While I do not want to offend program crop subsidy participants, more resources need to be allocated to education, research, and international trade matters.

First, resources and support need to be expanded for the land grant colleges, like the University of California which operates the University of California Kearney Research and Extension Center, the largest field station in the UC system, an active extension facility dedicated to agricultural research located in California's heavily agricultural Great Central Valley.

Research underway at Kearney includes projects involved with postharvest technology, plant breeding, noxious weeds, nematode biology, mealybugs, and groundwater management. Researchers are developing novel and specialty crops.

Likewise, funds need to be expanded for initiatives made by educational institutions like California State University - Fresno which is not part of the University of California system. CSUF and similar institutions assist in the development of practical technologies for agricultural producers.

Second, funding and staffing levels for the U.S.D.A. Foreign Agricultural Service has not kept pace with the increasing demands of conducting international trade with more stringent food safety and documentation standards. Greater resources need to be allocated to FAS and the agricultural attache offices that are operated overseas.

Third, the United States wine and grape industries are one of the world's great agricultural success stories. To remain competitive, the United States must expand its investment in grape product research and development.

I hope these comments are taken into account during the formulation of the 2007 Farm Bill in order to make California specialty agriculture successful in the 21st century.

Sincerely,

Barry F. Kriebel
President

BFK/mas