KEY FARM BILL FUNDING FOR SPECIALTY CROPS CONTAINED IN THE
PREVIOUS [2008] FARM BILL

Funding to USDA-APHIS

- The “Section 10201” provisions of the Farm Bill provides important funding to APHIS to help identify and prevent pest and disease threats to U.S. specialty crops. SAF continues to work very closely with APHIS officials as they allocate this funding: $50 million/year for FY 2011-2017. Current projects of special interest (successfully advocated by SAF and AmericanHort) include research on Chrysanthemum White Rust, Boxwood Blight, P. ramorum, gladiolus rust, nursery and greenhouse certification programs and new pest introductions. Current projects of particular interest to floriculture are described below.

Gladiolus Rust: Through Farm Bill funding, Dr. Cristi Palmer, the ornamental horticulture program manager of IR-4, coordinated a project of international research to help better understand how gladiolus rust moves in the plant, and what chemicals might be used to better control it. This research program ended in FY 2012.

Chrysanthemum research: Pressure has built on APHIS to modify its regulations governing chrysanthemum white rust. In order to provide the science which must underpin any decision, APHIS agreed that the Farm Bill could provide research funding to IR-4, ARS, and a key European researcher. Goals of that research are (1) to better understand how the pathogen might move inside the plant, i.e., whether it can stay “hidden” inside the plant; (2) to prove conclusively whether or not the disease overwinters outside in the U.S., (3) to test conclusively whether or not the pathogen moves in the plant, (4) to test current or in-development fungicides against the disease, and (5) test to see if the common Montauk Daisy is an alternate host and may serve as a reservoir for the disease during the “off-seasons.” We pushed successfully for that project to receive funding again in 2013. This project also is coordinated by Dr. Cristi Palmer, and participants include ARS, APHIS and international researchers.

New Insect Invaders: Dr. Lance Osborne, University of Florida, is working with other cooperators including Dr. Jim Bethke, University of California, and with IR-4, on developing “best practices” management techniques for several new insects and mealybugs which are threatening U.S. agriculture. Research is being done both on biocontrols and on chemical treatments. The goal of this project is for the research on controls to provide ways of managing these new pests in advance of their becoming a problem so that costly quarantines can be avoided.

Impatiens Downy Mildew: This new disease is devastating the ornamentals and landscape industry. A new, and very important, project was funded this year, thanks to the work of SAF and AmericanHort. Work is progressing by a number of key researchers on the genetics of this devastating disease, on ways to control
it, and on whether the disease can overwinter in soil. The researchers have agreed to coordinate closely with industry, as this new project moves forward.

**Nursery/Greenhouse Certification:** There is a growing move toward replacing, in part, shipment-by-shipment inspections of plants leaving the nursery or greenhouse, with “best management practices” or “certification” programs. Several studies toward this end are also funded through the Farm Bill APHIS monies.

**Specialty Crop Block Grant Program**

$55 million/year is currently divided among the states “to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.” Each state designs its own program, with guidance and oversight from USDA. As noted in various issues of Week in Review during the past years, several state organizations have successfully competed for funds, including the Texas State Floral Association program to increase demand for Texas plants and flowers, the Alaska Peony Growers Association, project to help improve Alaska production practices, the Hawaii Tropical Flower Council’s program to increase tropical flower brand awareness and sales, and others.

**Specialty Crop Research Initiative (“SCRI”)**

This is an important program, and we want to see it continue. It funded $50 million/year through FY 2012, but future funding depends on passage of the new Farm Bill. The program supports regional, multi-researcher projects to address the needs of specialty crop growers.

SAF and SCFBA support the program, but also worked very hard last year for language in the new bill to give industry a greater voice in reviewing research proposals which are submitted to this program.

**National Clean Plant Network.**

The National Clean Plant Network, multiyear funding for which also depends on passage of the new Farm Bill, is helping to bring new varieties of stock into the country and “clean them up” of viruses and other diseases before they are released to commercial growers.