



February 5, 2024

**Subject: Pulse Industry Requests for 2024**

**Dear Member of Congress:**

Pulse crops are a special subgroup of the legume family that includes dry peas, lentils, chickpeas, and dry beans. Pulses are nutrient dense, good for your health and good for the soil. They are a good source of protein and an excellent source of fiber. They have a low carbon footprint, a low water footprint, a low glycemic index, they are affordable and most important they are delicious. Twelve Thousand years ago, when our hunter-gatherer ancestors started to farm, the first crops they grew were wild varieties of pulse crops. Pulses are an ancient solution to our present-day problems. Heart disease and diabetes are two of the biggest killers in our country. Research has shown that pulse crops improve blood sugar control, reduce cholesterol and blood pressure. Because they fix their own nitrogen in the soil, pulse crops are critical to improving soil health and lowering greenhouse gas emissions in our food system.

The health and environmental benefits of pulse crops are undeniable. We ask Congress to invest in the following priorities so we can provide the nutrient dense foods that people need to improve their health and the health of the soils that feed us all:

- 1) **Farm Bill Priorities:** We support the passage of a new Farm Bill and an increase in its budget baseline as an investment in food security at home and around the world.
  - a) **Crop Insurance.** Expand federal support for crop insurance programs that provide essential risk management tools for farmers facing unforeseen natural disasters. The industry supports promoting increased coverage levels by reducing the premium costs to farmers. We oppose requiring farmers to choose between enhanced crop insurance and ARC/PLC.
  - b) **ARC/PLC.** Continue current de-coupled Title I programs to allow planting flexibility. We recommend an increase to pulse reference prices that reflect the dramatic increase in input costs facing all pulse producers. Increased reference prices for pulse crops are needed to bring the ratio of reference prices and market prices in line with other commodities. We support dual enrollment for ARC/PLC.
  - c) **Marketing Assistance Loans-** We support enhanced marketing assistance loan provisions to address increased borrowing costs.
  - d) **Base Acre Update.** Pulse acres have expanded significantly since the last base acre update in 2014. We support an increase in base acres to 100% of planted acres on the farm and a voluntary reallocation of those base acres based on recent planting history.
  - e) **Pulse Crop Health Initiative (PCHI).** We support the reauthorization of the PCHI research program at \$25 million per year for five years to find solutions to the critical health and sustainability challenges facing our society through research on pulse crops.
  - f) **School Pulse Crops Products Program (SPCPP).** Increase authorization for the SPCPP to \$4 million per year for five years (\$20 million total) to ensure the introduction and adoption of pulse foods in school nutrition programs.
  - g) **Add “Fava Beans” Exception to Base Acres.** We support the amendment of *Section 1114. Payment Acres, paragraph (e) Effect of Planting Fruits and Vegetables* to include Fava (also called Faba) Beans as an exception to base acre reductions required by planting of Fruits and Vegetables.
  - h) **Climate Friendly Marketing/Plant Protein Innovation Program.** We support the creation of a new USDA Marketing Program that would distribute marketing and innovation grants to commodity boards and organizations to promote climate-friendly crops and cropping systems.
  - i) **Create a Sustainable Agriculture Database.** The US pulse industry supports the establishment of a USDA carbon and water footprint database for all foods based on sound science that is regularly updated. We also support **voluntary** risk management and conservation programs that will help pulse crop farmers and processors achieve their goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and water use.

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- j) Market Development-** The USA Pulses industry consists primarily of small, family-owned businesses that provide value-added jobs in rural America. Strong market promotion programs are critical to increasing the demand for our commodities around the world. We support doubling MAP funding from \$200 million to \$400 million and the FMD Program from \$34.5 million to \$69 million in the new Farm Bill.
  - k) Food Aid.** Ongoing conflicts around the world continue to jeopardize food security. Providing food aid not only assists people in crisis; it creates the potential for future export markets. USA Pulses supports increased funding for the PL 480, McGovern-Dole, and Section 32 food aid programs in the new Farm Bill.
  - l) Rural Processor Disaster/Risk Management Tools.** USA Pulses supports the expansion of disaster aid/crop insurance to rural processors to help them survive unforeseen natural disasters, supply chain disruptions, and pop-up trade barriers. Funding for disaster and risk management tools for US pulse processors would provide short-term assistance to ensure critical processing infrastructure in rural America.
- 2) Transportation, Trade & Labor:**
- a) Federal Maritime Commission (FMC) and Surface Transportation Board (STB).** Shipping pulse products to our domestic and international markets via rail and ocean carriers continues to be an issue for pulse processors. The Ocean Shipping Reform Act was a step in the right direction toward reducing shipping delays, but the FMC must establish rules that require ocean carriers to put a priority on the shipment of agricultural commodities. In addition, the STB needs similar authority to encourage the railroads to prioritize agricultural shipments. We also support Snake River dam preservation.
  - b) Free and Fair Trade.** We urge Congress and the Administration to take an active role in pursuing regulations that promote U.S. pulse crops. USA Pulses supports the petition before the ITC to place a countervailing duty on Chinese pea protein that is being dumped into our market. We need Congress to grant Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) to the Administration. We need the Administration to develop and Congress to pass Free Trade Agreements (FTA's) with India, and other Asian countries to ensure the future growth of our industry.
  - c) H-2A Program-** The H-2A program has become an important program to secure the labor required to plant and harvest the food we grow. We support legislation to streamline the visa application process and to freeze the wage rate for H-2A temporary ag visa holders until the end of 2025.

#### **FY 2025 Appropriations:**

- a) Pulse Crops Health Initiative (PCHI) full funding at \$25 million for FY 2025.** The PCHI is currently funded at \$5.5 million in FY 2023. Currently, the PCHI is funding 51 projects focusing on nutrition, functionality, new product development, and enhancements for food production systems using pulses and pulse products. We urge full funding of \$25 million for the PCHI to provide additional scientific information about the nutrition, health benefits, and sustainability of pulse crops.
- b) USDA-Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Pulse Quality Network funding at \$6 million for FY 2025.** The USDA-ARS network of research labs that comprise the Pulse Quality Network investigates the quality parameters of pulses and pulse products. Funded at \$2.5 million in FY 2023, the pulse industry appreciates support for the Pulse Quality Network and urges a further increase to \$6 million in FY 2025.
- c) School Pulse Crops Products Program (SPCPP) funding at \$10 million for FY 2025.** The SPCPP has not received any funding to date. The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) clearly outline the need for including pulses across all age groups, from toddlers to older adults. The SPCPP will allow school systems to test, introduce, and assess new menu items made from pulses.

Pulses are an ancient solution to our present-day problems. We need to consume and produce more pulses.

Sincerely yours,



Tim McGreevy, CEO  
American Pulse Association and USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council