

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

03/19/2021

The Honorable Thomas Vilsack
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We write to congratulate you on your confirmation and request your support in researching and combatting the Spotted Lanternfly (SLF), an invasive species of planthopper insect from southeast Asia. We have worked with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) on a bipartisan basis for the past two years to address the negative impacts of the SLF on our farmers and agricultural workers. Additional resources are still needed to rid our regions of this pest, and as you finalize your Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) budget request, we urge you to request an increase in support to research and control the SLF.

Spotted Lanternflies were first found in Berks County, Pennsylvania in 2014. Since that initial discovery, they have been found throughout the states of Pennsylvania, New York, Maryland, Virginia, New Jersey, Connecticut, West Virginia, Ohio and Delaware, and they continue to spread across the country. These invasive pests are threatening our agricultural industries including vineyards, orchards, ornamental nurseries, and hardwoods. According to economic research from the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, the damage caused by the SLF could cost the Commonwealth \$324 million annually and cause the loss of over 2,800 jobs in Pennsylvania alone¹. In Chester County alone, up to \$66.9 million in orchards, vineyards, Christmas tree farms, and nursery products are potentially at risk from damage by SLF².

Grape growers are at a particularly significant risk of damage with reported yield losses, reduction in fruit quality, and even vine death. As a result, growers have increased their insecticide applications by 250%, raising their average application costs by \$93/acre. Across Pennsylvania, 89% of growers consider SLF a significant threat to their production system and 57% of growers impacted by SLF have stated that it significantly changes the outlook on the

¹ J. K. Harper, W. Stone, T. W. Kelsey, L. F. Kime. (2019). Potential Economic Impact of the Spotted Lanternfly on Agriculture and Forestry in Pennsylvania. [Center for Rural Pennsylvania](#).

² National Agriculture Statistics Service (2017). 2017 Census of Agriculture County Profile. Chester County Pennsylvania. [United States Department of Agriculture](#).

future of their farm (e.g. replanting, expanding)³. Moreover, 55% of growers managing SLF stated that it contributes either moderately or highly to their stress level, indicating that this invasive insect can affect more than just grape production³. Pennsylvania ranks fifth in wine production in the U.S., has over 300 wineries, and has a total economic impact to the state of PA at \$1.4 billion⁴. The SLF quarantine area in Pennsylvania and in surrounding states continues to expand, threatening even more grape producers.

In the 116th Congress, we worked with USDA to ensure the Department's budget request included an increase in funding to control this pest. We were pleased that President Trump's FY21 budget request included an increase of \$4 million from FY20 to research and control SLF, for a total of \$16 million. The House Committee on Appropriations supported this budget proposal and included \$16 million for SLF research and control measures in its FY21 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. This funding will have tangible, positive effects on the longevity and production of vineyards, orchards, and other agricultural operations in our districts. Therefore, we respectfully request that you include increased funding for these programs in your FY22 budget request.

As you begin setting policies and taking action for the great farmers of our nation, we urge you to ensure continued attention to this invasive pest, which affects our constituents' lives and livelihoods. Thank you for your consideration of our request, and we look forward to working with you and President Biden to manage this devastating insect.

Sincerely,



Chrissy Houlahan
Member of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

/s/ Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

/s/ Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress

/s/ Susan Wild
Member of Congress

/s/ Conor Lamb
Member of Congress

³ H. Leach (2020). Grower perception and risk management: response to the invasive pest, spotted lanternfly, in grapevines, *unpublished*.

⁴ Pennsylvania Wine Association (2018). [Economic Impact of the PA Wine and Grape Industries](#).

/s/ Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress

/s/ Dan Meuser
Member of Congress

/s/ Matt Cartwright
Member of Congress

/s/ Lloyd Smucker
Member of Congress

/s/ Andy Kim
Member of Congress

/s/ Guy Reschenthaler
Member of Congress

/s/ John Joyce, M.D.
Member of Congress

/s/ Scott Perry
Member of Congress

/s/ Mike Kelly
Member of Congress

/s/ Fred Keller
Member of Congress

CC: Mr. Rob Fairweather, Acting Director, Office of Management and Budget, The White House