



Indian Country Priorities and Opportunities for the 2018 Farm Bill *Title X: Horticulture*

Key Points and Recommendations

- Many traditional Native foods fall under the designation of horticulture crops and are necessary to support food sovereignty and healthy food access in Indian Country.
- USDA programs which oversee horticulture crops must engage in tribal consultation to ensure the unique needs of tribal producers are being met.
- The Farm Bill needs to include provisions to protect Native foods in the marketplace, as well as Native seeds and traditional foods.

Background Information and Context

The Horticulture Title supports specialty crop and organic farming operations with provisions that provide trade promotion and risk management assistance. Horticulture crops are extremely important to tribes and individual Indian producers for many reasons, and as a result, tribes and tribal producers must have equitable access to the programs authorized in the Horticulture Title. First, and most importantly, many of the traditional crops that are so important to the cultural and spiritual lives of Indigenous people are “produce” or “specialty crops” under federal law. Second, there are many individual and community acts of food sovereignty that are occurring throughout Indian Country that are critical to improving the health and wellness of tribal citizens. Indian Country health data is among the worst in the country. Chronic diseases, stroke, cancer, heart disease, obesity, and diabetes are at very high rates throughout Indian Country. One of the most important ways to address these health issues is to increase the amount of fresh fruits and vegetables available in our communities and to make those foods accessible locally and regionally. Third, as more of these foods are grown and raised in Indian Country, the surpluses are already finding their way into local and regional markets. Many tribes and tribal producers are improving their economic development alternatives by expanding into diverse food production systems.

Opportunities for Indian Country in the Horticulture Title

Tribal Consultation on Fruit and Vegetable Programs

- Require the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) agencies primarily responsible for specialty crops to engage in ongoing tribal consultation concerning the impact and growth of the fruit and vegetable sector within Indian Country and the opportunities and challenges that can be positively impacted by changes in USDA regulations.

Tribal Inclusion in the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

- Change the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program to ensure that tribal departments of food and agriculture are eligible for funding under this important program and that tribal projects are not required to go through state funding mechanisms at state departments of agriculture to receive support. There are very few tribal projects that currently receive support and, at the same time, the number of tribal departments of agriculture is likely to continue to grow over time. This



program is critical to the growth of this sector in Indian Country, and tribal sovereignty must be respected by allowing these new departments to receive funding parity.

Honey and Beekeeping Reports

- Include the growth and increase in beekeeping and honey operations in Indian Country in any reports on honey or beekeeping.

Tribal Farmers' Markets

- Require that a minimum of 10 percent of available funding in farmers' market and local food promotion programs grant funding authorities go to tribal and tribal producer farmer's markets and local food promotion activities. All definitions of farmers' market and local food promotion activities must ensure that tribal food systems and producers are not excluded from participation based on the unique ways that such markets and activities iterate in Indian Country.

Support for Tribal Organic Producers

- Launch a special program in USDA designed to increase technical assistance to those within Indian Country who are interested and prepared to transition to organic production.

Increased Support for FSMA Outreach

- Ensure that tribes and tribal producers receive adequate technical assistance from USDA and/or Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on the Food Safety Modernization Act of 2011 (FSMA) and that the ongoing implementation of FSMA does not inequitably or disproportionately negatively impact Indian Country food systems. The impact of FSMA implementation on tribal producers is different from the impact on any other U.S. producer due to the unique land base, legal jurisdiction, and production systems in Indian Country. At present, there is not enough funding to adequately reach tribal producers to ensure their knowledge of and compliance with FSMA requirements. In addition, the unique legal and political systems in Indian Country are not taken into consideration by USDA or FDA in fashioning approaches to FSMA compliance.

Protecting Native Foods in the Marketplace

- Require USDA to work with tribal governments, tribal organizations, and tribal producers to develop programs that are designed to protect the integrity of Native food products from fraudulent versions of their foods in the marketplace. The federal trust relationship requires that USDA work with tribal governments, tribal food companies, and tribal food producers to ensure that market regulatory mechanisms can be used to augment the ability and inherent legal authority of tribes to protect their unique food products. This can be done through geographic intellectual property mechanisms put in place by tribal governments to protect unique tribal foods or other appropriate legal mechanisms that must receive recognition by the federal government. These processes for protection should be fully supported and recognized by USDA.

Protect Tribal Seeds and Traditional Foods

- Require USDA to take steps after tribal consultation to ensure that tribal seeds are given the maximum protection available under federal law and not allowed to be accessed for commercialized purposes without the consent of tribal governments. Seeds of traditional foods are among the most sacred items to Indigenous peoples and the protection of those seeds, not only as food sources but as important cultural systems, must be required.



For more information, please contact: Colby D. Duren, *Policy Director and Staff Attorney*, at cduren@uark.edu.

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