

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 26, 2008

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Chambliss:

As you work toward reconciling the difference between the House and Senate versions of the Farm Bill, we would like to draw your attention to a provision in the Senate-passed bill that would require country of harvest labeling for ginseng. This provision has the support of ginseng growers in Wisconsin and many in the dietary supplement industry as a workable way to help ensure that consumers receive the US-grown product that they pay a premium for and that this premium rightfully returns to American farmers. Given this support, we urge you to retain Section 10004, Disclosure of the Country of Harvest for Ginseng, in the final version of the Farm Bill.

Wisconsin produces over 90 percent of the ginseng grown in the United States, with the vast majority of that ginseng grown in just one county, Marathon County. While US- and Wisconsin-grown ginseng command a premium price in world markets, this demand has also led to a serious problem of smuggled and mislabeled ginseng. While country of harvest labeling is not a panacea to these problems, it would provide another tool for fighting against these unfair practices and freeloading on the good name of American and Wisconsin ginseng.

The provision in the Senate-passed Farm Bill was based on our Ginseng Harvest Labeling Act of 2007 (S.1953 & H.R. 3340) and requires that ginseng, as a raw agricultural commodity, be clearly labeled with the country of harvest at the point of importation or when it is sold at wholesale or retail. In addition to working with your staffs to fine-tune the provision, we have worked to make sure these straight-forward labeling provisions are reasonable for the legitimate importers, wholesalers and retailers of ginseng. To prove this point, groups as disparate as the ginseng growers of the Ginseng Board of Wisconsin and dietary supplement trade associations such as American Herbal Products Association and the United Natural Products Alliance support our legislation.

While we realize that country of harvest labeling of ginseng is a minor provision in the Farm Bill as a whole, the Senate provision would significantly assist US ginseng growers and help consumers make informed choices about the ginseng that they consume. As you reconcile the Farm Bill differences, we urge you to retain Section 10004 of the Senate version.

Sincerely,



Russell D. Feingold



Herb Kohl