

Washington, DC -- Congressman Vern Buchanan voted today for a federal farm bill that invests for the first time ever in Florida agriculture. Buchanan was one of 16 bipartisan members of the Florida delegation to help pass the “Food, Conservation and Energy Act” (H.R. 2419). The farm bill is a five-year overhaul of agriculture policy. The bill includes \$230 million in federal funding for specialty crop research and promotion, including fruits and vegetables grown in Florida.

“This bill is a good bill for Florida farmers who will for the first time receive significant benefits,” said Buchanan. “It includes important investments in citrus, strawberries, tomatoes and other home-grown products. The inclusion of these specialty crops is not only historic, it is vital to the future of Florida agriculture.”

Under the bill, Florida growers would be eligible for federal grants to help fight pests and disease – including citrus greening, marketing, research, education, production, land conservation, and school nutrition programs, which would create a significant market for Florida crops.

“Florida agriculture contributes an estimated \$100 billion to the state’s economy,” added Buchanan. “This bill will help ensure a safe and affordable food supply and help maintain the state’s economy during these challenging times.”

Florida is the 10th largest agriculture state in the nation and the second largest producer of specialty crops. Buchanan noted that his Congressional District is the third-largest agricultural producer in the state, the number one producer of vegetables and melons and number two in citrus and cattle.

“We are proud of the work and support that Congressman Buchanan has given to Florida agriculture in supporting the Farm Bill,” said Sarasota Farm Bureau President Rory Martin. “He has provided real leadership by recognizing the challenges that our industry faces in Florida with pests, diseases, and uncertain markets. By courageously supporting this bill early on, Congressman Buchanan has opened the door for research, developing markets, and increasing nutrition funding for our school children and emergency food assistance.”

“We appreciate Congressman Buchanan for fighting so hard for Florida farmers,” said Hardee County Farm Bureau President and Wauchula Mayor David Royal. “He jumped in with both feet when he took office. Lately we’ve been facing one disaster after another. It’s become hard to farm because of rules and regulations. Getting extra funds when needed will help people to stay in business. This is a big boost for Florida agriculture -- a tremendous help.”

“The inclusion of specialty crops and the research funding available to Florida citrus through this farm bill will have a very positive impact to our \$9 billion Florida industry,” said Peace River Valley Citrus Growers Association Executive Director Barbara Carleton. “Greening research is the top priority for our industry and this additional funding could very well mean we are able sustain as an important economic contributor to the state rather than lose critical acreage to the disease. We praise Congressman Buchanan for his support of this important legislation.”

The bill passed the House 318 to 106 and awaits final approval in the Senate this week.