Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

August 20, 2021

Kevin Shea
Administrator
United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
4700 River Road
Riverdale, MD 20737

RE: Little Cherry Disease

Administrator Shea,

We write to you today concerning the emergence of Little Cherry Disease (LCD), currently impacting United States sweet cherry growers. We appreciate the attention that Deputy Administrator Osama El-Lissey has paid to this issue in meeting with representatives of the cherry industry last month.

This particular disease was first spotted in British Columbia, Canada, in the 1930s and soon after moved into Washington state and California in the 1940s and 1970s, respectively. When the virus first emerged, it completely decimated the regional cherry industry.

Over the last three years, the virus has reemerged and reached epidemic levels in Washington state. It is also spreading in Oregon, and cases have been reported in California and Utah. LCD infects the tree, resulting in small and bland fruit that is unmarketable. The only current remedy is tree removal. Symptoms are often not observed before LCD has already spread, ultimately requiring the entire orchard to be removed. Replanting costs are currently estimated at $64,000 per acre, with lost revenue estimated at an additional $54,000 over the seven years it will take for the new trees to achieve full production. [i]

The cherry industry has invested nearly $2 million in research on LCD. Additional resources through federal programs like the National Clean Plant Network and the Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention Program are needed for research, as well as to expand testing so that LCD can be detected early to reduce the potential for it spreading to neighboring trees and orchards.

Congress continues to have a strong interest in combatting LCD. In the report accompanying H.R. 133, the Fiscal Year 2021 Omnibus and COVID Relief and Response Act, it states that:

> *The agreement is concerned by the growing prevalence of Little Cherry Disease in the Pacific Northwest and California, and the significant threat that it poses to the region's stone fruit. The agreement encourages the Secretary to prioritize work and research on detection and mitigation of the disease and to work with growers, universities, and other partners to develop effective control mechanisms.*

Again, we appreciate the attention of Deputy Administrator El-Lissey to LCD and his work with the sweet cherry industry. We also appreciate the continued support from the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and its partnership with the State of Oregon and Oregon State University to monitor LCD in the PNW. As the battle against LCD continues, we respectfully request the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service continue to work with the cherry industry and allocate additional resources to research and testing capacity to eradicate LCD.

Sincerely,

Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress

Glenn "GT" Thompson
Member of Congress

[i] Galinato, S. P., & Gallardo, K. (2015). *Cost Estimates of Establishing, Producing and Packing Sweetheart Cherries in Washington State*. Washington State University. TB34.