



# Fresh Produce And Floral 2024 Public Policy Agenda

## *Charting the Course for Advocacy*

The International Fresh Produce Association (IFPA) is committed to building on the accomplishments of 2023 and creating an even brighter future for the fresh sector in 2024. The public policy team advances IFPA advocacy through our leadership in government relations. We also draw on guidance from IFPA's U.S. Government Relations Council, Board of Directors, member volunteer leaders, annual member survey, and industry allies to set the policy priorities that guide organizational success.

The 2024 Public Policy Agenda highlights the challenges and opportunities for the fresh produce and floral industry. It reflects the collaborative efforts between public policy and other IFPA teams, highlighting the organization's unwavering commitment to the industry's growth and success in creating a vibrant future for all.

# Prioritizing Workforce Challenges and Critical Labor Needs

The fresh industry relies on an affordable, predictable, and reliable workforce to meet the growing consumption needs of consumers worldwide. For U.S. producers, during these times of low unemployment and significant worker shortages for critical positions, Congress must provide better tools for employers to access the employees they need.

Policymakers in Washington, DC, have yet to rise to the occasion. To date, the U.S. Congress has failed to take any meaningful action to either address worker shortages or provide relief through existing regulations to employers facing escalating financial pressure and critical labor shortages. While this failure to deliver even minimal relief is disappointing, the Biden Administration's rush to implement multiple rule changes for the H-2A visa program creates huge increases in regulatory burdens and costs. Taken together, the Administration's ill-conceived action and Congress' failure to act loom as large over the produce sector as short-term threats to producers' competitiveness against imports and long-term threats to their businesses' viability.

2024 must be a year of action by Congress to pass legislation to stop the H-2A regulatory bleeding AND to pass real immigration reform. And, while comprehensive reform is ideal, we will not wait for the perfect political storm to pass meaningful regulatory and wage relief.

The need for reliable labor in the fields and orchards is urgent, but the entire fresh supply chain faces workforce challenges. On these broad issues, IFPA will keep pushing Congress and regulators to bring long-term stability to our workforce needs, including, if necessary, government intervention used most recently to deal with labor disagreement at ports, railroads, and in trucking.



## 2024 Actions

- Aggressively oppose and prevent the implementation of recent changes to the H-2A program that unfairly harm employers complying with the law in good faith, including a push for relief from wage increases and better certainty for producers.
- Prod Congress to finally pass comprehensive agriculture immigration reform legislation, including the following elements supported by IFPA members:
  - Open the H-2A program to year-round industries in the fresh produce industry, including contained environment agriculture (CEA), greenhouse, mushroom, and other protective agriculture.
  - Allow for fresh produce on-farm processing to utilize the H-2A visa program.
  - Address the inequities of the current Adverse Effect Wage Rate calculation and prevailing wage practices.
- Push to reform and remove the cap on the H-2B visa program and make it needs-based for more sectors.
- Support broad efforts to address the workforce challenges facing the fresh produce and floral supply chain, including mentorships, internships, education, training, and other skill-building opportunities critical to developing the future workforce.

# Expanding Fresh Produce Consumption for Better Health

With only 10 percent of Americans following federal guidance on fruit and vegetable consumption and staggering rates of diet-related disease, IFPA has made it a top priority to identify policies that improve consumption rates. Following the historic 2022 White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health, tackling hunger and improving health outcomes continue to make headlines. IFPA is committed to capitalizing on the conference's national strategy and executing its vision to ensure federal programs and policies align with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The goal is to actively address the underconsumption of fruits and vegetables and promote better health outcomes for all.

## 2024 Actions

- Fight back against efforts to cut the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) fruit and vegetable benefit levels and advocate for a final WIC food package regulation that makes the benefit level permanent.
- Identify opportunities to drive Produce Prescriptions toward a standard practice of clinical care, including through appropriations, regulatory action, and legislation.
- Advocate for nutrition in U.S. Farm Bill programs, including the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) procurement programs.
- Improve transparency of consumer fruit and vegetable labeling through the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).
- Provide science-based feedback during the Dietary Guidelines for Americans process.



# Advancing Market Competitiveness and Supply Chain Efficiency

International trade plays a crucial role in providing a diverse range of fresh fruits, vegetables, and floral to consumers throughout the year. It helps to ensure there are no disruptions in the supply chain, which in turn prevents extreme price fluctuations in the marketplace. Trade in fresh produce and florals is also an important source of income for producers and stimulates economic activity in communities across the world. To support those economic realities, it is essential that trade rules are fair and reasonable. It is especially important that domestic regulatory burdens on producers are considered when evaluating trade opportunities and enforcing related obligations. IFPA actively works to address unwarranted sanitary/phytosanitary or non-tariff barriers imposed by governments that could threaten the opportunities for the trade of fresh fruits, vegetables, and floral.

IFPA also advocates for policies enhancing supply chain efficiency, such as infrastructure, transportation, and other business-related measures that benefit the fresh sector and the broader economy.



## 2024 Actions

- Support expansion and enhancement of current USDA market access trade programs, including the Market Access Program (MAP), the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC), and the newly minted Regional Agricultural Promotion Program (RAPP).
- Drive policy and regulatory recommendations that expand responsiveness to trade issues at USDA, U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), and other federal government agencies involved in trade-related matters focused on fresh industry products.
- Identify and support reducing and eliminating technical trade barriers that prevent access to important markets, including ensuring that trade restrictions and market access terms are science- and risk-based and enforced consistently and fairly.
- Ensure that U.S. trade negotiations provide new market opportunities and are fair and supportive of fresh produce and floral products, e.g., the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, and with the European Union and Taiwan.
- Engage with Congress on floral priorities as they consider renewing the General System of Preferences (GSP).
- Pursue regulatory improvements that ensure undisrupted and priority access for fresh fruit and vegetables to all transportation networks, including rail, road, and air transportation.
- Engage with the U.S. Federal Maritime Commission (FMC) to ensure robust implementation of the Ocean Shipping Reform Act.
- Support improvements to federal infrastructure and transportation policies, including resources at U.S. points of entry to ensure timely inspection of perishable goods, which provide better logistics and access for the fresh produce and floral industry.

# Strengthening Agricultural Production and Stewardship

IFPA membership ranges from indoor, vertical agriculture to in-field fresh-cut flowers. This diversity provides an advantage in influencing policies that broadly impact production methods. The fresh industry faces shared challenges, which require collective efforts to address. IFPA is advancing industry priorities that broaden our influence and leadership in the regulatory and legislative arena on policies impacting food and farm production.

2023 was another busy year for the fresh sector's organic industry. This year, IFPA continues to lead the way in advocating for sensible policies and elevating our visibility with the USDA National Organic Program (NOP), National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), and Congress.

The fresh sector production faces escalating input costs that undercut the business bottom line. Price increases for essential supplies like fertilizers, seeds, and crop protection tools – coupled with inflation – cut into IFPA members' profitability. IFPA is working with allies in the food and farm sector to advance solutions and policies that support building a reliable supply of the inputs needed to meet the needs of agriculture and the food supply chain.

Losing crop protection and biotechnology tools is increasingly top of mind for IFPA producer members. To address that concern, IFPA consistently pushes for programs and resources that combat and mitigate pests and diseases. Our continued fight for balanced regulatory policies helps to protect the food system and our members' livelihoods. We advocate for sensible, science-based regulations that safeguard the use of pesticides and plant technologies without burdening growers with unreasonable restrictions or the loss of irreplaceable production tools.

Stewardship of natural resources and protection of the environment is essential to the success of every food and farm business and the health of our communities. IFPA engages on policies and programs regulating water and air quality, species protection, and resource access, such as water volume and availability, that directly affect the viability and success of fresh sector production.

## 2024 Actions

- Be the leading voice representing the organic produce sector before the NOSB, NOP, Congress, and the administration by consistently providing meaningful feedback and engagement.
- Amplify allied efforts supporting indoor and contained environment agriculture.
- Ensure that regulation of crop protection tools and fertilizers is based on sound science and provides an adequate number of effective tools for specialty crops and fresh industry producers, including ensuring that risk-based decision-making is used to formulate government policies and international maximum residue limits (MRL).
- Collaborate with allies and service providers on ways to decrease input costs, including efforts to expand the domestic production capacity of fertilizer.
- Insist on science-based regulation of modern plant breeding, including gene-editing, as a crucial tool to combat pests and disease, improve health and nutrition, and enhance sustainability through reduced need for water and other inputs.
- Accelerate engagement with like-minded allies and the government agencies that regulate resources and the environment to ensure that fresh produce and floral perspectives are heard, policy decisions are sound, and agency actions reflect the needs of our industry.

# Championing Reauthorization of the Next Farm Bill

In the U.S., preparation for reauthorizing the next Farm Bill began in earnest in last year. In 2024, IFPA remains a key leader in the [Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance](#) and in all efforts to influence the U.S. Congress on the policies needed to help the fresh sector thrive over the next 5-year Farm Bill cycle. IFPA prioritizes programs and policies through collaboration with the Alliance.

## 2024 Actions

- Secure new programs, policies, and resources that foster innovation, increase consumption of fresh produce, and provide tools and technologies that modernize the fresh produce and floral industry.
- Push for transformative programs to drive industry opportunities through research, automation, market access, nutrition, conservation, supply chain, organic, promotion, climate, and risk management and financial tools.
- Continue as a key leader in the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance to ensure the adoption of IFPA priorities in the next Farm Bill.



# Unified Policy Actions

## Leading the Way on Food Safety

The fresh produce industry is dedicated to providing safe and fresh fruits and vegetables. We strive to work with the regulatory and public health community to implement food safety policies that are based on sound science. As food safety regulations and our understanding of biological and chemical hazards evolve, it becomes increasingly important to form a closer working relationship with the FDA.

This year, the FDA plans to implement changes in the Human Foods Program, which may require oversight or action from Congress. With a new Deputy Commissioner for Human Foods in place, we have a unique opportunity to rebuild the FDA into a more effective, efficient, transparent, and collaborative organization. As a result, IFPA will intensify our advocacy efforts to support this initiative.

## Intensifying Global Focus on Sustainability and Packaging

IFPA leads the farm and food sector in advancing fresh produce and floral initiatives on sustainability, adaptation, and mitigation of climate change and regenerative agriculture. Together with our members and allies, we are investing resources, including funding from USDA climate- and packaging-related grants, to find workable solutions and innovations for our industry. To amplify this work, IFPA is active in the Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance (FACA), ensuring that our sector has a strong voice on climate and sustainability issues and – when necessary – staking out positions that are most impactful for fresh produce and floral.

IFPA is also driving a new global coalition of the food and agriculture allies – the Alliance for Sustainable Packaging for Foods – to push back on the European Union and Canada’s ill-conceived efforts to eliminate the use of all plastics and packaging in produce and other perishable foods. The Alliance advocates for sustainable packaging options that protect food safety, product integrity, and meet consumer expectations without increasing the food supply chain’s carbon footprint.