



April 24, 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

North Carolina produces about 8,800 acres of watermelon valued at over \$7.7 million. North Carolina ranks about 7th in the nation, producing over 11 million pounds.

The North Carolina Watermelon Association (NCWA) expresses their support for the Agriculture Reimbursement of Expenses for Legal Immigrant Employees in Farming legislation introduced in both the North Carolina House and Senate, also referred to as the AgRELIEF Act (H1364 and S881).

Even in the economic downturn, watermelon growers are finding it difficult to find the workers they need to maintain their farming operations. Because of the shortage of U.S. agricultural workers, many of our growers employ workers through the H2A program.

If H1364 and S881 were to pass this would level the playing field and may encourage more farmers to use the legal H2A program.

NCWA is supportive of this cost-share program and commends State government for this pro-active step to encourage and assist farmers with hiring legal farm workers.

Sincerely,

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NCWA Executive Council

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