United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

JUL - 1 2013

The Honorable Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator
300 Ala Moana Boulevard, #3-106
Honolulu, Hawaii 96850

Dear Senator Hirono:

Thank you for your letter of April 15, 2013, regarding the effects of the coffee berry borer on the coffee industry in Hawaii. The Department of Agriculture (USDA) recognizes the importance of the Kona coffee crop to Hawaii as well as the threat posed to it by the Coffee Berry Borer (CBB). I apologize for the delayed response.

USDA shares your concerns about the agricultural and economic impacts of this noxious pest. As such, I am pleased to announce that USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) has funded an Areawide Integrated Pest Management Program to aid in controlling CBB in the United States. We were able to allocate $1 million of additional resources for fiscal year 2013 to this effort in addition to the $844,000 that we already put toward this problem through our base funded program in Hilo, Hawaii.

Scientists in Hilo will work in cooperation with ARS National Program Staff to organize the most effective program possible to address this pest problem. Although ARS will be taking responsibility to lead this effort, we anticipate organizing the necessary research in cooperation with the Hawaii Department of Agriculture (HDOA), the University of Hawaii, and representatives from the Hawaii Coffee Industry.

Through our combined efforts, these additional resources should effectively accelerate our ability to control the CBB and more quickly reduce its economic damage.

To that end, ARS plans to use an integrated set of technologies to help resolve this problem. These techniques include the following:

- Bloom synchronization, in which plant growth regulators are used to reduce the number of blooms to one or two, thus making it easier for growers to mass harvest the berries;
- Development of microbial control agents such as *Beauveria bassiana,* which is already being adapted for use;
- The use of nematodes as biological control agents, which are being studied by ARS as well as by scientists in other organizations; and
- The development of an effective sanitation program, which would depend on growers practicing "bean stripping" to reduce ground litter that harbors the CBB.

These new resources are to be used over a 3- to 5-year period to address CBB control as quickly as possible. Working across a wider area of concern in a highly coordinated manner has, in the past, been far more effective in controlling invasive insect pests than working strictly on a farm-by-farm basis. These added resources will accelerate ongoing scientific efforts and allow USDA to effectively collaborate with other organizations to assist with this problem.

Additionally, the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) will continue to work closely with the Hawaii Department of Agriculture to determine the extent of the CBB infestation. As you may know, CBB was detected in Puerto Rico in 2007, 3 years prior to its detection in Hawaii. Accordingly, APHIS officials will work with State regulatory officials in Puerto Rico and Hawaii to share any advances in science and control methodologies.

Again, thank you for your letter. Should you have other questions, please have a member of your staff contact Brian Baenig, USDA's Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations, (202) 720-7095 or Brian.Baenig@osec.usda.gov.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary