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California farm groups urge Costa appointment as ag committee chair

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A coalition of California farm organizations and water districts has formally asked House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to appoint Rep. Jim Costa, D-Fresno, as the new chair of the House Agriculture Committee.

In a letter sent to Pelosi last week, the 70 organizations said Costa “possesses the experience and leadership adeptness” to serve effectively as committee chair. The position opened last week when the current chair, Rep. Collin Peterson, D-MN, was defeated for re-election.

The letter cites Costa’s 16 years of experience representing an agriculturally productive

congressional district in the San Joaquin Valley, plus his long-time advocacy on behalf of federal nutrition programs, expansion of foreign markets for U.S. farm products, workforce issues and immigration reform, agricultural research, natural resources policy and on-farm conservation programs.

“Jim Costa has a broad and deep understanding of what’s needed to bring food and farm products to Americans’ homes,” said Jamie Johansson, president of the California Farm Bureau Federation, one of the organizations that signed the letter. “The people and businesses in his district encompass every aspect of the food system, giving him a unique perspective on what’s needed to assure continued supplies of safe, affordable, plentiful food and farm products.”

Ian LeMay, president of the California Fresh Fruit Association, described Costa as “a trusted voice and a stalwart advocate for both producers and consumers. He understands the issues affecting production agriculture, nutrition, conservation, labor and natural resources, and can create consensus for a better way forward.”

“Farmers are increasingly seen as critical partners in the implementation of environmental policies, yet much more needs to be done to provide them the resources needed to meet regulatory mandates and ensure farmers are true partners in environmental policy, and no one understands this as deeply as Jim,” Western Growers President and CEO Dave Puglia said.

“As a senior member of the House Agriculture Committee, Congressman Costa has consistently shown his ability to work across the aisle while demonstrating a common-sense and pragmatic approach in dealing with a wide array of agricultural issues,” said Elaine Trevino, president of the Almond Alliance of California.

Casey Creamer, president/CEO of California Citrus Mutual, said the House Agriculture Committee “needs a leader who understands agriculture’s importance not only for our farmers, but for underserved communities and national security. Congressman Jim Costa is that leader.”

“It is vital to the future success of California agriculture to be represented by a member who can be a voice for our industry and help us work together on issues prevalent to our industry's future,” said Kirti Mutatkar, president and CEO of UnitedAg.

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