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Government affairs insights for floral

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On Thursday, May 18, the House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies held a business meeting to markup Fiscal Year 2024 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies Bill. The bill provides a non-defense discretionary total of \$25.313 billion for programs under the jurisdiction of

the Subcommittee, \$532 million (2.1 percent) below the FY23 enacted level and \$3.622 billion (12.5 percent) below the FY24 President's Budget Request. The bill prioritizes protecting food and drug supply; supporting farmers, ranchers and rural communities; expanding access to broadband; investing in critical agricultural research; and ensuring access to nutrition programs for low-income individuals and families. Funding toward the Agriculture Research Service (ARS) and the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service was essentially kept flat, avoiding any drastic cuts. Both agencies are home to programs that support floriculture through research, responding to domestic pest and disease issues, as well as facilitating the import of floral material that meets U.S. Phytosanitary standards. The markup concluded with the Subcommittee favorably reported the bill to the Full Committee by voice vote. The full House Appropriations Committee markup is expected to take place this week on Wednesday, May 24.

On Thursday, May 11, President Biden hosted a small, bipartisan group of lawmakers at the White House to discuss the upcoming farm bill reauthorization. Congress is aiming to write and pass what is expected to be a \$1 trillion-plus bill, but some senior Senate Republicans are increasingly wary that the mounting debt crisis could derail the traditionally bipartisan farm bill. The group of invitees included: House Agriculture Committee Chair Glenn "G.T." Thompson (R-PA), Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), House Agriculture Committee Ranking Member David Scott (D-GA), and Senate Agriculture Committee Ranking Member John Boozman (R-AR). In addition, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack also attended the meeting. Looking at the farm bill, the specialty crop provisions provided are vital to floriculture search and responding to pests and disease in the industry.

On Wednesday, May 10, the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry held a nomination hearing for Xochitl Torres Small to be Deputy Secretary of USDA. Torres Small has served as the Under Secretary for Rural Development since Oct. 2021. During the hearing, senators raised concern over USDA's efficiency and staffing. Torres Small was nominated in February to serve following former Deputy Secretary Jewel Bronaugh's resignation. Before her time at USDA, she served in the U.S. House of Representatives where she represented New Mexico's 2nd Congressional District. She was a member of the House Agriculture Committee and served on both the Biotechnology, Horticulture, and Research Subcommittee and the General Farm Commodities and Risk Management Subcommittee. Torres Small brings a well-rounded ag policy background into this role, especially a strong familiarity with specialty crop issues.

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