TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

TODD STAPLES
COMMISSIONER

April 13, 2009

Mr. Thomas Bewick
United States Department of Agriculture
Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service
1400 Independence Avenue SW, Stop 2201
Washington, DC 20250-2201

Re: Specialty Crop Research Initiative

Dear Mr. Bewick:

I would like to express my support for the grant proposal submitted by Dr. Mani Skaria of the Kingsville Citrus Center at Texas A&M University in response to Funding Opportunity *USDA-CSREES-SCRI-002038*. Their team is proposing using microbudded citrus in high density planting to greatly improve production from small plots.

Since microbudding of citrus allows the trees to produce fruit much more quickly, the economics of citrus immediately improve. High density planting on small land holdings will allow landowners with limited acreage and resources to enter the industry – even farmers who lease land might be able to participate. For example, using high density techniques, a farmer could plant 2,200 trees on 5 acres instead of the normal 22 acre plot.

Receipt of this grant would greatly improve economic development opportunities in the Rio Grande Valley and enhance the citrus industry nationwide. I very much appreciate your consideration of this important project.

Sincerely yours,

Todd Staples

TS/RR/jf

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