

Flag should be featured prominently

Fruit and vegetable marketers should include the American flag on packaging for U.S.-grown produce, U.S. Rep. Dennis Cardoza believes.

Cardoza, D-Calif., on July 27 introduced HR1558, also called the Grown in America Act. The resolution states: "Be it resolved that fruit and vegetable and commodity producers are encouraged to display the American flag on U.S.-grown product labels, reminding us all to take pride in the healthy bounty produced by American farmers and workers."

Cardoza said promoting U.S.-grown produce with the symbol of the U.S. flag makes sense.

"I have consistently advocated the need to support products made in the United States," Cardoza said in a news release. "Given our ongoing work to pull back from the recession, I believe it is extremely important that we raise awareness and consciousness about products produced in the greatest country in the world."

Tony Blanco, co-owner and president of Coachella, Calif.-based Desert Fresh Inc., said grape shippers in the Coachella Valley have been featuring the U.S. flag on their fruit for at least 10 years.

"We were the first to do it, and we still do it," he said.

"We have the flag on the bag itself. We have a flag on the master container, and we also have the California Grown logo."

Blanco said buyers ask for the flag on the bag, and he said the U.S. flag helps to clearly communicate the origin of fruit.

The quarter inch lettering of "produce of USA" or "produce of Mexico" can get lost in the presentation of the bag and the fruit, whereas the graphic flag symbol stands out, Blanco said.

"We have been told that studies have shown that given the choice, consumers will pick up the American fruit first," he said.

The resolution, if passed by the majority of members, would become the express opinion of the House of Representatives. The resolution could be voted on as early as the end of July, according to a spokesman for Cardoza's office.