

October 21, 2009

The Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman, Committee on Finance
U.S. Senate
Senate Dirksen 219
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member, Committee on Finance
U.S. Senate
Senate Dirksen 219
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Baucus and Ranking Member Grassley,

The undersigned food and agricultural organizations, representing producers, workers, exporters and other stakeholders in the farm and food sector wish to express strong support for President Obama's selection of Dr. Isi Siddiqui as chief agricultural trade negotiator in the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR).

The position of chief agricultural negotiator with the rank of ambassador was created by Congress in 1997 for the express purpose of ensuring that U.S. agriculture is fully represented in trade negotiations at the highest possible level with the support of the U.S. Congress. The position has been filled by highly qualified individuals since its inception to the enormous benefit of the agriculture sector.

We believe Dr. Siddiqui is an excellent nomination to fill the role of agricultural ambassador and we urge the Senate Finance Committee to move forward with his confirmation at the earliest opportunity.

Dr. Siddiqui brings to the position a wealth of valuable experience from his four decades of work in agriculture as a respected doctor of plant science and as an expert in international trade policy. Dr. Siddiqui served for 28 years with the California Department of Food and Agriculture, where he attained the position of chief plant scientist in the nation's largest agricultural state. From 1997 to 2001, Dr. Siddiqui served at the U.S. Department of Agriculture as Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, Senior Trade Advisor to Secretary Dan Glickman and Deputy Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs. In the latter capacity, he worked closely with the USTR and represented USDA in bilateral, regional and multilateral agricultural trade negotiations.

Dr. Siddiqui's scientific background was invaluable to U.S. agriculture in dealing with the myriad of sanitary and phytosanitary measures that foreign countries erect to restrict

U.S. exports, and this expertise will be of even greater value today, as onerous barriers have become endemic.

Dr. Siddiqui's experience in trade negotiations as senior trade advisor to the Secretary of Agriculture will be critical to achieving U.S. trade objectives for agriculture in the World Trade Organization (WTO) Doha Round of negotiations and in other future trade agreements.

We urge you to act on Dr. Siddiqui's nomination as soon as possible. In order to achieve progress on the critical agricultural trade issues of concern to the undersigned companies and trade associations, we believe it is critical to fill this key position without delay, and we can think of no more capable individual than Isi Siddiqui.

Sincerely,

American Cotton Shippers Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Feed Industry Association
American Meat Institute
American Peanut Product Manufacturers, Inc.
American Soybean Association
Blue Diamond Growers
California Cherry Export Association
California Fresh Tomato Growers
California Grape and Tree Fruit League
California Pear Growers
California Table Grape Commission
Corn Refiners Association
Distilled Spirits Council of the United States
Grocery Manufacturers Association
Growth Energy
International Dairy Foods Association
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Meat Association
National Milk Producers Federation
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Pork Producers Council
National Potato Council
National Renderers Association
National Sorghum Producers
National Sunflower Association

North American Export Grain Association
Northwest Horticultural Council
Pet Food Institute
Sweetener Users Association
U.S. Apple Association
U.S. Dairy Export Council
U.S. Wheat Associates, Inc.
United Egg Association
United Egg Producers
United States Dry Bean Council
US Canola Association
US Meat Export Federation
USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council
USA Rice Federation
Western Peanut Growers Association

cc: Members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Finance