

September 3, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Hogan
White House Director of Presidential Personnel
Office of Presidential Personnel
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500
FAX: 202-456-2009

Dear Ms. Hogan:

The U.S. agricultural community remains concerned with the continued delay in appointments to key trade positions. Specifically we feel that it is urgent to name both a Chief Agricultural Negotiator in the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) and a Special Assistant to the President for Agricultural Trade and Food Assistance.

Time is of the essence in this matter. While U.S. agricultural trade policy remains largely undefined pending these appointments, trade issues that our industries face around the world also persist. American agriculture is dependent on exports, and the economic health of rural communities and workers in related processing industries is tied to opening markets – and keeping those markets open. But, continued vacancies in these top trade positions diminish the ability of the United States to effectively engage with our trading partners over critical issues, and could ultimately weaken the economic viability and employment in the U.S. agriculture and food sectors.

Last year, agricultural exports continued to grow at a record pace despite the economic downturn, and were one of the few sectors to generate a positive trade balance for the United States. The economic benefits from this trade cannot be ignored. Our collective industries provide jobs and income for not only rural America but all parties in the value chain from producers and shippers to consumers. And as such, we view the U.S. agricultural export sector as a key partner in the Administration's economic stimulus and recovery efforts.

We are confident that the Administration will make appointments that reflect the special requirements of these positions that require a strong background in agricultural trade as well as the will to fight for the interests of American farmers, ranchers and agribusinesses. It is

important that these individuals not only understand the needs of U.S. agriculture, but also the intricacies involved in trade negotiations. Having strong individuals in these positions is essential to successful U.S. policy.

Once again, we urge the Administration to name a Chief Agricultural Negotiator at USTR and a Special Assistant to the President for Agricultural Trade and Food Assistance as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

AgriBank, FCB	National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
American Cotton Shippers Association	National Grain and Feed Association
American Feed Industry Association	National Grape Cooperative Association, Inc.
American Meat Institute	National Milk Producers Federation
American Soybean Association	National Oilseed Processors Association
Blue Diamond Growers	National Pork Producers Council
California Cherry Export Association	National Renderers Association
California Grape and Tree Fruit League	National Sorghum Producers
California Kiwifruit Commission	National Sunflower Association
California Pear Growers	North American Export Grain Association
California Table Grape Commission	North American Millers Association
CHS Inc.	Sunkist Growers
CoBank	U.S. AgBank, FCB
Commodity Markets Council	U.S. Canola Association
Corn Refiners Association	U.S. Dairy Export Council
Distilled Spirits Council of the U.S.	US Hides, Skins & Leather Association
International Dairy Foods Association	US Wheat Associates
National Association of Wheat Growers	United States Dry Bean Council
National Barley Growers Association	USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council
National Cattlemen's Beef Association	USA Rice Federation
National Chicken Council	Western Growers

CC: The Honorable Patrick Gaspard, Deputy Assistant to the President and
Director of Political Affairs
Ambassador Ronald Kirk, U.S. Trade Representative
The Honorable Thomas Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture