

Hon. Max Baucus, Chairman
United States Senate Committee on Finance
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6200

Hon. Chuck Grassley, Ranking Member
United States Senate Committee on Finance
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-1501

Re: Nomination of Islam Siddiqui as Chief Agriculture Negotiator for the United States Trade Representative

Dear Chairman Baucus and Ranking Member Grassley:

The following organizations representing environmental, consumer, anti-hunger, family farm, farmworker, fishing, sustainable agriculture and other advocacy groups are writing to express our opposition to the nomination of Islam Siddiqui as Chief Agriculture Negotiator at the office of the United States Trade Representative. We urge the Senate Finance Committee to reject Siddiqui's appointment.

Siddiqui's record at the U.S. Department of Agriculture and his role as a former registered lobbyist for CropLife America (whose members include Monsanto, Syngenta, DuPont and Dow), reveals him to be consistently in favor of agribusinesses' interests over the interests of consumers, the environment and public health. His appointment sends an unfortunate signal to the rest of the world that the United States plans to continue down the failed path of industrial agriculture by promoting toxic pesticides, inappropriate biotechnologies and unfair trade agreements on nations that do not want and can least afford them. As the global food crisis deepens and negotiators prepare to meet at the upcoming World Trade Organization ministerial on November 30, the United States needs a trade negotiator who understands that current trade agreements work neither for farmers nor the world's hungry.

Siddiqui's record and statements in his government positions and at CropLife America show his clear bias in favor of chemical-intensive and unproven biotechnology practices that imperil both our planet and human health while undermining food security and exacerbating climate change. We believe Siddiqui's nomination has severely weakened the Obama Administration's credibility in promoting healthier and more sustainable local food systems here at home. Siddiqui's confirmation would send a message to the world that the United States continues to place the vested interests of our pesticide and biotech industries ahead of concern for public health, the environment, and the well-being of farmworkers and communities around the world.

With farmers here and abroad struggling to respond to water scarcity and increasingly volatile growing conditions, we need a resilient and restorative model of agriculture that adapts to and mitigates these effects of climate change. In the most comprehensive analysis of global agriculture to date, the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) states unequivocally that "business as usual is not an option." We need a new, sustainable model of agriculture that regenerates soil health, sequesters carbon, feeds communities, protects farmworkers and puts profits back in the hands of farmers and rural communities. Siddiqui's clear track record favors none of these solutions.

We call on the Senate Finance Committee to reject Islam Siddiqui's nomination and reorient trade policy to serve the interests of family farmers, farmworkers, consumers and the planet.

Sincerely,

Alaska Community Action on Toxics
AllergyKids
American Raw Milk Producers Pricing Association
Beyond Pesticides
Breast Cancer Action
California Food and Justice Coalition
Californians for GE-Free Agriculture
Californians for Pesticide Reform
California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation
Center for Environmental Health (CA)
Center for Food Safety
Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment
Central Florida Jobs with Justice
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
Community Farm Alliance (KY)
Concerned Citizens for Clean Air (OR)
Cornucopia Institute
EarthJustice
Equal Exchange
Family Farm Defenders
Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance
Farm Worker Pesticide Project (WA)
Farmworker Association of Florida
Farmworker Justice
Farmworker Self-Help (FL)
Food & Water Watch
Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy
Food for Maine's Future
Florida Immigrant Coalition
Food Democracy Now!
Florida Organic Growers
Fresno Metro Ministry
Friends of the Earth
Greenpeace US
Grassroots International
Indigenous Environment Network
Indiana Toxics Action
Innovative Farmers of Ohio
Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy
Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
Kids for Saving Earth
Kentucky Environmental Foundation
Land Stewardship Project
Lideres Campesinas (CA)
Maine Fair Trade Campaign
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association
Maryland Pesticide Network
Mississippi Association of Cooperatives
Missouri Rural Crisis Center
Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative (OK)
National Family Farm Coalition
National Farm Worker Ministry
National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association
New York Environmental Law & Justice Project
Northeast Organic Farming Association
Interstate Council (NOFA-IC)
Northern Plains Resource Council (MT)
Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance
Oakland Institute
Ohio Conference on Fair Trade
Oklahoma Black Historical Research Project
Oregon Fair Trade Campaign
Oregon Toxics Alliance
Organic Consumers Association
Partners for the Land & Agricultural Needs of Traditional Peoples (WV)
Pesticide Action Network North America
Pesticide Free Zone
Pesticide Watch
Physicians for Social Responsibility (Los Angeles)
Public Citizen
Rural Advancement Foundation International – USA
Rural Advancement Fund
Rural Coalition
Safe Alternatives for our Forest Environment (CA)
Science and Environmental Health Network
Sciencecorps
Search for the Cause (CA)
Sierra Club
Small Holders Alliance of Massachusetts
The Second Chance Foundation
Washington Fair Trade Coalition
Western Organization of Resource Councils
World Hunger Year

Cc: Members of the Senate Finance Committee

For more information, contact Marcia Ishii-Eiteman, Pesticide Action Network (415) 981-6205 ext 325 mie@panna.org and Katherine Ozer, National Family Farm Coalition (202) 543-5675 kozer@nffc.net