

*AgBiotech Planning Committee
225 Reinekers Lane
Suite 650
Alexandria, VA 22314*

April 29, 2009

The Honorable Kathleen Merrigan
Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Deputy Secretary Merrigan:

The AgBiotech Planning Committee (ABPC) is a coalition representing farmers, food processors and manufacturers, merchandisers and biotechnology providers that support the continued availability and marketability of products derived from agricultural biotechnology. We would like to meet with you to discuss our positions on agricultural biotechnology issues.

ABPC has been a resource to administration officials over the past ten years. We provide a forum for policymakers to discuss agriculture biotechnology issues, exchange information with the food chain groups and work to reach consensus positions on important policy issues.

Growing demands on U.S. and global agriculture to produce more food, feed, fiber and fuel will continue to require innovation and the application of the best available science. Agricultural biotechnology plays an important role in crop productivity and resource conservation. It can help the United States to increase production, improve nutrition, provide for energy security and improve fiber development.

Science- and risk-based regulations and policies are integral to the continued development and use of agricultural products derived through biotechnology. The U.S. Coordinated Framework, which provides flexibility for evolving food and agricultural biotechnology innovations, is an important example. The long-standing U.S. government labeling policy that requires labeling for food products, only when those products are significantly changed in terms of their nutrition, function or safety (e.g. allergenicity) is another.

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) are vital to USDA's mission regarding oversight and trade of agricultural biotechnology. ABPC members value APHIS's regulatory oversight and review of products derived from agricultural biotechnology. It, and other USDA agencies, must

have the necessary resources to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act.

U.S. government actions should encourage and facilitate trade flow. Trading partners with functioning regulatory systems that are transparent and science-based are critical to the marketability of biotechnology-derived commodities and food. FAS provides valuable assistance by promoting the acceptance and marketability of U.S. agricultural products internationally.

Leadership from FAS will help ensure that the European Union and other countries that have instituted bans and policies that are not scientifically justifiable adhere to their World Trade Organization obligations. FAS, in cooperation with other U.S. government agencies, can also provide leadership for the adoption of the Codex Annex on Food Safety Assessment in Situations of Low-Level Presence of Recombinant-DNA Plant Material in Food. This Annex will provide valuable guidance for setting information and data requirements by importing countries and for future negotiations of the Cartagena Protocol for Biosafety.

Thank you for the opportunity to share information about our coalition and positions. We will contact your office in the near future to arrange a meeting to discuss these important issues further.

Sincerely,

American Farm Bureau Federation
American Seed Trade Association
American Soybean Association
Biotechnology Industry Organization
Corn Refiners Association
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Grain and Feed Association
National Oilseed Processors Association
North American Millers' Association
USA Rice Federation
US Grains Council