

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

February 26, 2008

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The AgBiotech Planning Committee (ABPC) congratulates you on your confirmation as Secretary of Agriculture and looks forward to working with you and other USDA officials to help assure the continued safe development, commercialization and trade of biotech products.

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

Growing demands on U.S. and global agriculture to produce more food, feed, fiber and fuel will continue to require biotechnology and innovation. Agricultural biotechnology plays an important role in crop productivity and resource conservation. It has the potential to help the United States address challenges such as food security, improved nutrition, energy security and provide improvements in fiber development.

ABPC appreciates the Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service's rigorous regulatory oversight and review of the U.S. agriculture biotechnology industry. The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) provides valuable assistance promoting the acceptance and marketability of U.S.

agriculture products internationally. Both functions are vital to USDA biotechnology oversight and should remain a departmental priority. We also encourage USDA to lead coordination among U.S. government agencies on the development of biotechnology policies.

We support policies and regulations that protect public safety, promote international acceptance and marketability of biotechnology-derived crops and processed foods.

ABPC urges your administration to continue to implement and support:

- Science- and risk-based regulations and policies that affect the development and use of agricultural products derived through biotechnology, including continuity and refinement of existing regulation and oversight through the Coordinated Framework;
- Negotiations with U.S. trading partners that result in policies and functioning regulatory systems that are transparent and science-based. Policies for the export of U.S. agricultural products developed through biotechnology should encourage and facilitate trade flow. Leadership from USDA-FAS should ensure that the European Union, and other countries that have instituted bans and policies not based on science, adhere to their WTO obligations;
- Current U.S. government policy that requires food labeling for products produced through biotechnology only when such products have been significantly changed nutritionally or the allergenicity, toxicity, or composition have been altered;
- Agencies having the necessary resources to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA); and,
- USDA and other agencies advocating for the adoption of the *Codex Annex on Food Safety Assessment in Situations of Low-Level Presence of Recombinant-DNA Plant Material in Food*, for setting information and data requirements by importing countries.

Thank you for the opportunity to share information about our coalition and priorities. We will contact your office in the near future 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
U.S. Grains Council
USA Rice Federation