

October 28, 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 are writing to express support for Michael Punke, the President's nominee for Deputy U.S. Trade Representative and U.S. Ambassador to the World Trade Organization (WTO). We hope the Senate Finance Committee will move expeditiously through the necessary background reviews and hearings and will act quickly to approve Mr. Punke for this critical position.

The Deputy U.S Trade Representative based in Geneva is responsible for carrying out U.S. policies at the WTO, coordinating U.S. on-site negotiating efforts in the Doha Development Agenda trade negotiations and advising officials in Washington on strategies and tactics that will best ensure outcomes that are consistent with U.S. trade objectives.

We believe Mr. Punke's prior experience in the field of international trade policy will prove to be excellent preparation to carry out these crucial responsibilities. In the early 1990s, Mr. Punke served as international trade counsel on the staff of Senator Max Baucus, followed by four years of service dealing with international affairs in the Clinton administration. This included two years as senior policy adviser at USTR for Ambassador Mickey Kantor. During this period, Mr. Punke established a reputation as a thoughtful and respected negotiator who fought hard for U.S. interests. His trade policy background in both Congress and the executive branch will provide him with invaluable perspective on what will be needed in Geneva for a successful WTO agreement.

We are convinced that Mr. Punke will be a quick study on the many issues for which he will be responsible, and we are certain that he will have no difficulty gaining the respect of his counterparts in Geneva, a task that will prove essential to achieving U.S. trade goals at the WTO.

For these reasons, we have the utmost confidence that Michael Punke is the right person to handle the challenges he will face as he works to promote the interests of America's producers and exporters in the WTO, and we look forward to working with him in the coming years.

Sincerely,

American Cotton Shippers Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Farmland Trust

American Meat Institute
American Peanut Product Manufacturers
American Sheep Industry Association
American Soybean Association
American Sugar Alliance
Corn Refiners Association
Grocery Manufacturers Association
International Dairy Foods Association
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Grower's Association
National Chicken Council
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Milk Producers Federation
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Pork Producers Council
National Potato Council
National Sorghum Producers
Sweetener Users Association
United Dairymen of Arizona
United Egg Producers and United Egg Association
USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council
USA Rice Federation
U.S. Dairy Export Council
US Rice Producers Association
U.S. Wheat Associates, Inc.
Western Peanut Growers Association

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