

December 23, 2004

The Honorable Bill Frist
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-221
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leaders Frist and Reid:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our strong support for the timely confirmation of the President's nominee, Governor Mike Johanns, to serve as the Secretary of Agriculture. As the son of a dairy farmer and as a two-term governor from America's heartland, Governor Johanns thoroughly understands agricultural policy. His lifetime work with farmers and ranchers makes him a solid choice to lead the United States Department of Agriculture.

We appreciate and value the service provided by outgoing Secretary Ann M. Veneman. During the last four years, U.S. agriculture has helped revive our nation's economy. We have reached record levels of net cash farm income and agricultural exports. We have seen an increase in alternative sources of energy production and we have seen science and technology accelerate the efficiency and production of modern agriculture.

Our organizations aim to build upon these gains and look forward to working with the Bush Administration on its guiding principles for agriculture. America's food and agriculture industry will face many challenges in the near future, including budget reconciliation, reauthorization of the Farm Bill, and several international trade agreements. A steady and consistent farm policy is an important element of our national security, ensuring that Americans will continue to have access to the safest and most abundant food supply. Moreover, a healthy U.S. agriculture sector is vital to a strong national economy. The U.S. food and fiber industry employs 25 million Americans, produces an annual \$3.5 trillion in output, and accounts for 15 percent of the Gross Domestic Product.

Our organizations represent many of those in America's food and fiber sector and we commend President Bush for nominating Governor Mike Johanns to be the next Secretary of Agriculture. We urge the United States Senate to confirm him, without delay in order to fill this important post for the U.S. agriculture.

Respectfully,

National Pork Producers Council
National Corn Growers Association
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Cotton Council
National Turkey Federation
American Cotton Shippers Association
Pet Food Institute
National Renderers Association
National Association of Wheat Growers
USA Poultry & Egg Export Council
USA Rice Federation
American Soybean Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
Independent Community Bankers of America
American Sugar Alliance
Agricultural Retailers Association
Alabama Farmers Federation
American Sheep Industry Association
Ricebelt Warehouses, Inc.
The Fertilizer Institute
CropLife America
The American Beekeeping Federation, Inc
The Northeast States Association for Agricultural Stewardship
National Potato Council
National Barley Growers Association
National Sunflower Association
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council
U S Canola Association
National Grain Trade Council
Transportation, Elevator and Grain Merchants Association
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Chicken Council
United Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Association
National Milk Producers Federation
Corn Refiners Association