

March 1, 2010

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

Dear Senator:

The undersigned 113 organizations are writing you to express our opposition to the nomination of Islam Siddiqui as Chief Agriculture Negotiator at the office of the United States Trade Representative. Our organizations— representing family farmers, farmworkers, fishers and sustainable agriculture, environmental, consumer, anti-hunger and other advocacy groups—urge you to reject Dr. Siddiqui’s appointment when it comes up for a floor vote, despite the Senate Finance Committee’s favorable report of his nomination on December 23, 2009.

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), has revealed him to consistently favor agribusinesses’ interests over the interests of consumers, the environment and public health. We believe Siddiqui’s nomination severely weakens the Obama Administration’s credibility in promoting healthier and more sustainable local food systems here at home. His appointment would also send a harmful signal to the world that the United States plans to continue down the worn but now obsolete path of chemical and energy-intensive industrial agriculture while promoting toxic pesticides, inappropriate seed biotechnologies and unfair trade agreements on nations that neither want nor can afford them.

The United States urgently needs a trade negotiator who understands that current trade agreements work neither for farmers nor the world’s hungry. 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 climate change and that moves us towards energy-efficient farming.

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 biodiverse, ecologically-based agriculture that regenerates soil health, sequesters carbon, feeds communities, protects farmworkers and puts profits back in the hands of family farmers and rural communities. Siddiqui’s track record shows that he favors none of these solutions.

We call on the Senate 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 (AK)
AllergyKids (CO)
American Raw Milk Producers Pricing Assoc.(WI)
Beyond Pesticides (DC)
Breast Cancer Action (CA)
California Food and Justice Coalition (CA)
Californians for GE-Free Agriculture (CA)
Californians for Pesticide Reform (CA)
California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation (CA)
Carolina Farm Stewardship Assoc. (NC)

Center for Biological Diversity (AZ)
Center for Environmental Health (CA)
Center for Food Safety (DC)
Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment (CA)
Central Florida Jobs with Justice Project (FL)
Clean New York (NY)
Clean Water Action (US)
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach (NE)
Community Farm Alliance (KY)
Concerned Citizens for Clean Air (OR)

Congregation of Holy Cross Peace and Justice (DC, US, intl)
 Cornucopia Institute (WI)
 Corporate Accountability International (MA)
 Creative Kid Studio (AR)
 Earth Justice (CA)
 Environmental Health Fund (MA)
 Environmental Health Project/Ecology Center (MI)
 Equal Exchange (MA)
 Fair Trade Coalition (MN)
 Family Farm Defenders (WI)
 Farm Aid (MA)
 Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance (TX)
 Farm Worker Pesticide Project (WA)
 Farmworker Association of Florida (FL)
 Farmworker Justice (DC)
 Farmworkers Self-Help (FL)
 Florida Immigrant Coalition (FL)
 Florida Organic Growers (FL)
 Food & Water Watch (DC, CA, intl)
 Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy (CA)
 Food for Maine's Future (ME)
 Food Sleuth LLC (MO)
 Food Democracy Now! (IA)
 Food Systems Integrity (MA)
 For a Better Bronx (NY)
 Fresno Metro Ministry (CA)
 Friends of the Earth (DC, CA, intl)
 Glynn Environmental Coalition (GA)
 Greenpeace US (DC, CA, intl)
 Grassroots International (MA/intl)
 Growing Power Inc. (WI)
 growing SOUL (Sustainable Opportunities for Universal Learning) (MD)
 Healthy Child, Healthy World (CA)
 Hoosier Environmental Council (IN)
 Indigenous Environmental Network (MN)
 Indiana Toxics Action (IN)
 Innovative Farmers of Ohio (OH)
 Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy (MN)
 Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (IA)
 Jacobs Farm/Del Cabo (CA)
 Justice from Farm to Plate (VT)
 Kids for Saving Earth (MN)
 Kentucky Environmental Foundation (KY)
 Land Stewardship Project (MN)
 Lideres Campesinas (CA)
 Maine Fair Trade Campaign (ME)
 Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners (ME)
 Maryland Office for Global Concerns (DC)
 Maryland Pesticide Network (MD)
 Minnesota Food Association (MN)
 Minnesota Pesticide Awareness (MN)
 Mississippi Association of Cooperatives (MS)
 Missouri Rural Crisis Center (MO)
 Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative (OK)
 National Family Farm Coalition (DC)
 National Farm Worker Ministry (MO)
 National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association (DC)
 New York Environmental Law & Justice (NY)
 Northeast Organic Farming Association Interstate Council (CT)
 Northern Plains Resource Council (MT)
 Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance (ME)
 Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides (OR)
 Oakland Institute (CA)
 Ohio Conference on Fair Trade (OH)
 Oklahoma Black Historical Research Project (OK)
 Oregon Fair Trade Campaign (OR)
 Oregon Toxics Alliance (OR)
 Organic Consumers Association (MN)
 Partners for the Land & Agricultural Needs of Traditional Peoples (WV)
 Pesticide Action Network North America (US/intl)
 Pesticide Free Zone (CA)
 Pesticide Watch (CA)
 Physicians for Social Responsibility/L.A. (CA)
 Post Carbon Institute (CA)
 Public Citizen (DC)
 Rochesterians Against the Misuse of Pesticides (NY)
 Rural Advancement Foundation International USA (NC)
 Rural Advancement Fund (SC)
 Rural Coalition/ Coalición Rural (DC)
 Safe Alternatives for our Forest Environment (CA)
 Science and Environmental Health Network (IA)
 Sciencecorps (MA)
 Search for the Cause (CA)
 Sierra Club (CA, DC)
 Small Holders Alliance of Massachusetts (MA)
 Student Action with Farmworkers (NC)
 The Endocrine Disruption Exchange (CO)
 The FGE Food and Nutrition Team (NY)
 The Safe Lawns Foundation (ME)
 The Second Chance Foundation Washington (WA)
 Washington Fair Trade Coalition (WA)
 Western Organization of Resource Councils (MT)
 World Hunger Year (NY)

Cc: Members of the Senate

Please direct return correspondence to Dr. Marcia Ishii-Eiteman, Senior Scientist, Pesticide Action Network, mie@panna.org (415) 981-6205 ext 325 and Katherine Ozer, Executive Director, National Family Farm Coalition, kozer@nffc.net (202) 543-5675. We will forward your response to the groups signing this letter.

