

**Statement of Islam A. Siddiqui  
Nominee for Chief Agricultural Negotiator,  
United State Trade Representative  
Before the Senate Finance Committee  
November 4, 2009**

Mr. Chairman, Senator Grassley and members of the Committee, I am honored and humbled to sit before you as the Committee considers my nomination to be the Chief Agricultural Negotiator at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

I thank President Obama for nominating me for this position and Ambassador Kirk for his confidence in my abilities. This opportunity is particularly challenging given the current economic climate and the need to make real progress toward opening markets and creating jobs.

During the past 40 years, I have spent my career, both in government and the private sector, witnessing first-hand the critical role the agricultural sector plays in our national and rural economy. More than one-third of our agricultural products are exported to countries around the world. According to a recent report by USDA, our agricultural exports in 2008 totaled \$115.3 billion, whereas imports were \$80.5 billion. Our farmers and ranchers are the most productive in the world and as a result, they are able to compete successfully in the global marketplace. In large part, America's competitive edge in agriculture has been the result of adopting new technologies and state-of-the-art farm management tools.

Throughout my public service with the California Department of Food and Agriculture and USDA, I have found that scientific evidence can be a powerful tool in breaking down trade barriers. As Director of California's plant protection and quarantine programs for 13 years, I was involved in a number of sanitary and phyto-sanitary issues with our trading partners. I learned that resolution of SPS issues required painstaking negotiations supported by scientific facts in order to remove non-tariff barriers. These experiences also proved instructive when I worked with USDA-APHIS officials in the 1990's to lift a ban on U.S. citrus fruit exports to China, which was imposed due to Medfly infestations in California. This 18-year old ban against all U.S. citrus exports was lifted in 2000 after extensive negotiations with Chinese officials and an exchange of detailed protocols for fruit fly detection, fruit surveillance and eradication treatments.

My time in Washington has also taught me the importance of dialogue, consultation, and coordination with all stakeholders in forging consensus on agricultural trade issues. As Senior Trade Advisor to USDA Secretary Dan Glickman, I was responsible for coordination of inter-agency efforts within USDA and also served as a Liaison with USTR and other cabinet level agencies. I also represented the U.S. government on a number of agricultural trade issues with our trading partners in Asia, Latin America and the European Union.

My approach with our trading partners has always been based on consultation and diplomacy as a starting point and a more vigorous exercise of our rights under the WTO when necessary. Monitoring and enforcement of trade agreements is a cornerstone of a strong trade agenda. As such, I applaud USTR's recent decision to request a dispute settlement panel within the WTO

regarding the European Union's ban on importation of U.S. poultry meat and meat products processed with pathogen reduction treatments, which are considered to be safe by U.S. and European food safety authorities. If confirmed, I plan to work closely with USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack and his team in our efforts to remove the non-tariff barriers faced by U.S. farmers and ranchers.

Pursuing trade deals that benefit our farmers and ranchers, in particular in the Doha Round, will be another of my key priorities. Based on the briefings I have received, it is my understanding that the Doha Negotiations have made progress on some issues, but the larger stumbling blocks remain unresolved. If confirmed, I commit to devote my best efforts to achieve an ambitious and balanced outcome on agriculture, something that has eluded us for the last eight years. It is evident that we are being asked to make significant concessions in the first two pillars of the agricultural negotiations— domestic support and export competition. Therefore, a final agreement on agriculture must provide commercially meaningful market access for U.S. agricultural products into the markets of developed and emerging economies.

If confirmed, I look forward to working under the leadership of Ambassador Ron Kirk and work with his outstanding team in USTR to achieve President Obama's trade agenda, especially as it relates to agricultural trade. I also look forward to working closely with members of this Committee and Senate and House Committees on Agriculture in addressing many challenges and opportunities that we face in agricultural trade.