



December 22, 2008

Secretary of Agriculture-designate Tom Vilsack
Presidential Transition Team
Washington, DC 20270

Dear Secretary-designate Vilsack:

The Organic Trade Association (OTA) extends its congratulations to you on being nominated to serve as Secretary of Agriculture.

Since before the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 established the National Organic Program, OTA has been an advocate for the funding needed to support the National Organic Program and other services the organic business community needs to succeed in an increasingly complex global market. OTA has 1,700 member businesses (large and small) from all parts of the supply chain, including organic farming, processing, distribution, exporting, and retailing, for food, textiles and personal care products. The members of the Organic Trade Association represent the majority of the organic products produced and sold across America.

As the leading voice for the organic industry, OTA looks forward to working with you, your Under Secretaries and the entire staff of the Department of Agriculture on issues critical to not only the organic agriculture and business community but the Department and American consumers as a whole. Organic agriculture, products and processing are an important and growing sector of the economy, even during these turbulent economic times. U.S. sales of organic products are expected to reach 23 billion dollars in 2008. Organic food and beverages are the fastest-growing sector of the food industry, with average growth rates in the high teens for the past decade.

OTA works on issues crucial to the organic business community including key provisions in the 2008 Farm Bill important to organic agriculture, such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)'s support for farmers transitioning to organic production, the Organic Certification Cost Share Program, the Organic Research and Extension Initiative, and a review of the Federal Crop Insurance Program as it relates to organic producers.

OTA looks forward to a productive working relationship with you, your office and across USDA.

Sincerely,

Christine Bushway
Executive Director
Organic Trade Association

Julia Sabin
OTA Board President
Smucker Quality Beverage, Inc

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