

James C. Greenwood
President & CEO

January 23rd, 2009

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

On behalf of the Biotechnology Industry Organization, I wish to offer my most sincere congratulations upon the occasion of your confirmation as the 30th Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture! BIO looks forward to working with you on issues important to the agricultural biotechnology industry and the American producers who benefit from the technology, and to continuing to build upon years of collaboration with USDA.

President Obama's commitment in his Inaugural Address to using the soil to fuel our cars, the importance of restoring science and "wielding technologies' wonders" highlights the critical nature of your leadership at USDA to support innovation as well as the contributions that biotechnology makes to sustainable food and fuel production. BIO is committed to advancing these priorities and working with USDA to attain these goals.

BIO represents more than 1,200 biotechnology companies, academic institutions, state biotechnology centers and related organizations across the United States and in more than 30 other nations. BIO members are involved in the research and development of innovative healthcare, agricultural, industrial and environmental biotechnology technologies.

As you begin your leadership of USDA, BIO welcomes the opportunity to share our key priorities. To facilitate innovation in agricultural technologies, BIO supports scientifically-based regulation of plant and animal products derived from biotechnology and will continue to work for the acceptance of biotech products by our trading partners.

USDA regulations have supported the development of agricultural biotechnology for nearly two decades with significant benefits to farmers, the environment and American consumers. For example, biotechnology has enabled growers to increase use of no-till farming, to reduce pesticide applications, and to increase agricultural yields.

The existing regulatory process and the Department's reliance on a risk-based assessment of biotechnology-derived products under 7 CFR Part 340 has worked quite well over the last twenty years and has been a critical element to the growing biotech industry. Consequently, BIO urges that these science- and risk-based USDA regulations (7CFR part 340) be revised in a timely



manner. New rules should enhance public confidence in the U.S. regulatory framework for biotechnology-derived products and appropriately address low level presence issues.

USDA will also play a critical role in realizing the President's vision of a clean and secure energy future. Programs such as the Biomass Crop Assistance Program, the Biorefinery Assistance Program, and the Biomass Research and Development Program are vital to the development of sustainable feedstocks and industrial biotechnologies for the production of next generation biofuels. These programs are urgently needed – especially in light of the current economic environment – and should be implemented without delay.

USDA also has a unique role in the development of non-fuel biobased products, such as biobased plastics and polymers that can further reduce our dependence on petroleum imports. The federal procurement requirements and labeling program of the Biobased Markets Program are key to the commercialization of these innovative products, and should also be implemented without further delay.

BIO will continue to convene a cloning coalition of food chain groups promoting a sound, market-based introduction of the technology. This coalition is focusing on implementation of a supply chain management program and food retailer education. Further, BIO supports a coordinated regulatory approach between the USDA and the U. S. Food and Drug Administration, which seeks to alleviate duplication of regulatory review, while providing consumers and trading partner's confidence in safe products from Genetically Engineered (GE) animals.

Lastly, BIO will continue to work with the Administration, Members of Congress, and our trading partners to communicate the safety and importance of biotechnology. BIO appreciates USDA focusing its work with other government agencies and our international trading partners to resolve unjustified trade barriers to U.S. agricultural exports derived from biotechnology, particularly with the European Union, Korea, and Mexico.

Again, BIO congratulates you on your outstanding achievement. We look forward to a strong and productive relationship on issues of concern to U.S. agriculture.

Sincerely,



James C. Greenwood
Jim Greenwood
President & CEO