

July 8, 2013

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Chair
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran, Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Cochran:

We the undersigned organizations are writing in support of the President's nomination of Krysta Harden as Deputy Secretary at the Department of Agriculture. In our view, Harden has a strong grasp of food, agriculture, and rural policy issues, is a skilled coalition builder, and knows how to work closely with Congress. We urge you to hold a confirmation hearing and approve her nomination as Deputy Secretary as quickly as possible.

As you know, Harden grew up on a family farm and has worked for the House Agriculture Committee, the American Soybean Association, and the National Association of Conservation Districts. This background has served her well in her roles of Chief of Staff and as Assistant Secretary of Congressional Relations at USDA during these past four years. In addition to these formative experiences, her openness to dialog and consensus building with diverse constituencies and stakeholders and her commitment to fairness helps form the basis for our support of her nomination.

These are challenging times for those engaged in food and agricultural policy. We will continue to urge Congress to adopt a new five-year farm bill that reforms crop subsidies, includes full nutrition and conservation funding, enhances equity and diversity, and increases investments in new farmers, renewable energy, rural development and job creation, local and regional food systems, organic farming, healthy food access, and enforcement of competitive markets. We will also continue to urge Congress to repeal sequestration and end the practice of appropriating via continuing resolutions, raids on farm bill funding, and across-the-board spending reductions that are the opposite of thoughtful legislating and smart investment.

We are hopeful the current political stalemates will come to an end this year and the job of Deputy Secretary therefore will be to help guide and manage a forward-looking set of programs and reforms that move us toward 21st century programs and policy at the Department. The status quo of farm bill extensions and continuing resolutions is really quite intolerable. In either event, however, whether the stalemate is broken or not, we believe that Harden will be an excellent member of the leadership team at USDA and will be committed to change and to getting the best results possible under whatever circumstances present themselves. We hope you agree and approve her nomination without delay.

Sincerely,

Alianza Nacional de Campesinas
Audubon
Center for Rural Affairs
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Community Food & Justice Coalition
Environmental and Energy Study Institute
FamilyFarmed.org
Farmers Market Coalition
The Food Trust
Hmong National Development, Inc.
Housing Assistance Council
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future
Land Stewardship Program
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
National Center for Appropriate Technology
National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association
National Organic Coalition
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
North Carolina Association of Black Lawyers Land Loss Prevention Project
Organic Farming Research Foundation
Organic Trade Association
Roots of Change
Rural Advancement Foundation International – USA
Rural Advancement Fund
Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural
Rural Development Leadership Network
Slow Food USA
Stonyfield Farm
Wholesome Wave

cc:

Members of the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee
The Honorable Harry Reid
The Honorable Mitch McConnell