

March 23, 2021

Ambassador Susan Rice
Domestic Policy Advisor
White House Domestic Policy Council
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Ambassador Rice:

Congratulations on your appointment to lead the White House Domestic Policy Council. We look forward to working with you and serving as key allies to implement the President's bold agenda on climate change, immigration, racial equity and economic recovery. The impacts of COVID-19, climate change, and challenging market dynamics in agriculture are compounding to reveal just how vulnerable our food and agriculture system is for workers, farmers, consumers, animals, and the environment. We must do better to create a more equitable food system that serves to lift up both rural and urban communities that depend on it.

In just a few short decades, organic has become one of the fastest growing segments in food and agriculture, reaching \$55 billion in annual sales last year. The voluntary USDA Organic program has been a lifeline to tens of thousands of farming families, providing them an opportunity to achieve economic stability through the increased market premiums that result from adopting practices intended to benefit both animals and the environment. Consumer demand for organic continues to grow with more than 80% of U.S. households purchasing organic products.

However, in order for organic to continue to thrive, the Biden/Harris administration must address several of the decisions made by the prior administration, which were not conducive to organic growth. Most notably, the withdrawal of the Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices (OLPP) final rule must be reversed. The OLPP rule, which was issued in the final days of the Obama/Biden administration, was the result of over a decade of collaborative work between industry, consumers, and stakeholders.

It set comprehensive animal welfare and outdoor access standards for organic livestock and poultry. Allowing animals to engage in natural behaviors by providing outdoor access for their health and welfare is one of the core tenets of organic farming and one of the primary reasons consumers purchase organic. Yet, the previous administration took a very narrow interpretation of the Organic Foods Production Act stating that USDA did not have the authority to regulate animal welfare for organic livestock.

This erroneous determination has adversely affected the marketplace and undermined consumer trust. Nearly 50% of the organic poultry market is now dominated by a handful of producers that do not allow meaningful outdoor access for hens. The result has made it more difficult for

organic livestock farmers that operate at higher welfare standards to compete on a level playing field, and has restricted opportunities for small and medium sized producers to enter the organic market. We ask that you rescind the previous administration's withdrawal and reinstate the Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices final rule immediately. These steps are necessary to restore consumer confidence in the USDA Organic seal, improve animal welfare, protect the environment, and support the thousands of family farms that are the backbone of the organic industry.

Sincerely,

Organic Trade Association

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

American Sustainable Business Council

Dr. Kathleen Merrigan, former Deputy Secretary of Agriculture (2009-2013)

Center for Science in the Public Interest

Consumer Federation of America

Environmental Working Group

National Farmers Union

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

Natural Resources Defense Council, Lena Brook, Director, Food Campaigns

National Young Farmers Coalition

Organic Egg Farmers of America

Union of Concerned Scientists

cc: Thomas J. Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture