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July 6, 2017

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Dear Secretary Perdue,

The Cornucopia Institute is a national organic food and farming organization dedicated to protecting the integrity of organics and the opportunity for family farmers to engage in practices supported by millions of American consumers. We believe we have more certified organic farmer-members than any similar organization.

We have been intimately involved with policies and regulations developed by the USDA's National Organic Program. Our legal, policy, and scientific staff have participated in meetings of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) since our founding in 2004, regularly providing board members with detailed analyses and comments on issues brought before them.

We are contacting you to express our profound disappointment with a recent decision by the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), presumably in consultation with its National Organic Program, that rejects recommendations made by the 15-member stakeholder NOSB pertaining to three conventional materials that were scheduled for their five-year sunset review.

All three ingredients were unanimously rejected for continued inclusion on the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances by the NOSB (an expert advisory panel created by Congress).

The decision by AMS to allow the continued use of conventional whey protein concentrate, inulin-oligofructose enriched and Turkish bay leaf is troubling, as it clashes with the governance of organics, as detailed in the 1990 Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA). It appears to us that industry lobbyists were able to muscle this through, despite the careful review of the materials made by the NOSB, after extensive consultation with organic stakeholders and public comment, when they reached their reasoned conclusions at their most recent meeting.

We would welcome an opportunity to share with you further information on the historic public-private partnership that was created by the organic community, seeking federal oversight and regulation, with the passage of OFPA. Since it is early in your tenure, we assume you and top leadership at the USDA did not receive an accurate and balanced appraisal of either the organic industry dynamic, in which the NOSB operates, or the merits of discontinuing the use of these three conventional ingredients in organic food production.

And once again, we would like to take this opportunity to encourage you to consider appointing new management at the National Organic Program. Just today, another highly critical article appeared in the *Washington Post* outlining systemic failures in organic regulatory oversight and the enforcement regime you have inherited.

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This is a terrible black eye to the organic movement and highly damaging to ethical farmers and their marketing partners.

Please let us know of your interest in a dialogue on these matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Kastel", with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Mark A. Kastel
Codirector