

Organizational Letter: Congresswoman Marcia L. Fudge for Secretary of USDA

Dear President-elect Biden,

As a broad coalition of environmental, farmer, animal welfare and food safety organizations, we congratulate you and Vice President-elect Harris on your victory and support your commitment to appointing the most diverse and representative Cabinet in history. To that end, we write to endorse Congresswoman Marcia L. Fudge to be the next Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Congresswoman Fudge is a skilled and compassionate leader of unparalleled reputation and integrity. She has long been an ally to farmers, food-chain workers, consumers, and rural communities. She is best positioned to help the Department navigate today's unprecedented challenges—from the ongoing rural crisis, to climate change, to the pandemic's rupturing of our food system.

Congresswoman Fudge advocates for food chain workers, the unsung heroes of our food system who labor in some of the most dangerous working conditions of any industry. She urged USDA and other agencies to strengthen workplace protections for slaughterhouse workers at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. She fights industry-led attempts to increase line speeds at processing plants, including a measure (HR 7521) to suspend line speed waivers and prevent new issues during the pandemic. We can expect Congresswoman Fudge to equally support fair working conditions within USDA; she voiced her support of USDA workers seeking to unionize within the Economic Research Service (ERS) and National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

She strongly supports family-scale farms and regional food systems. She has introduced bills to increase local procurement for the National School Lunch Program and to increase scrutiny of foreign investment in U.S. farmland. Congresswoman Fudge also understands the central role farmers play in fighting climate change and protecting natural resources. She sponsored the House version of a bill (HR 6182) to measure and report on conservation programs outcomes and spearheaded an effort to address agricultural runoff and improve soil health in the 2018 Farm Bill.

The Congresswoman is also an advocate for farmers and communities historically underserved by USDA. She introduced the Fair Access for Farmers and Ranchers Act (HR 6336), which would make farmers operating on land held by heirs' property eligible to participate in USDA programs. In March, she called on USDA to step up enforcement of civil rights violations against its workers and program applicants. As the first Black woman to serve as Agriculture Secretary, Congresswoman Fudge would address the Department's legacy of discrimination against Black and other historically-underserved farmers, and ensure these groups have full access to USDA programs and resources.

Congresswoman Fudge has an unparalleled track record of protecting and strengthening nutrition programs. She was a vocal critic of the Trump administration's work to strip Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, calling it a "war on people in

need.” She continues this fight to increase SNAP and other crucial nutrition benefits during the pandemic.

The next Secretary of Agriculture will take over the Department at a time of unprecedented challenges to our farming and food system. Congresswoman Fudge is up to the challenge. We wholeheartedly endorse her nomination as the next Secretary of Agriculture.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
Animal Legal Defense Fund
Animal Welfare Institute
Brighter Green
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Food Safety
Climate Justice Alliance
Encompass
Family Farm Action
Food & Water Action
Humane Farming Association
Humane Society Legislative Fund
Mercy For Animals
Oil Change U.S.
Open Markets Institute
People's Action
Rapid Shift Network
The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)
The Humane League
198 methods
350.org

State and Local Organizations

Advocates for a Clean Lake Erie
Alaska's Big Village Network
Armonia
Calhoun County Against CAFOs
Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment
Campaign for Renewable Energy

Colorado Farm and Food Alliance
Earth Action, Inc.
Farmworker Association of Florida
For West Virginia's Future
Friends of Family Farmers
Friends of the Earth
Greater Highland Concerned Citizens
Green State Solutions
iEat Green
Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
Iowa Citizens for Responsible Agriculture - Worth
Land Stewardship Project
Lower East Side Ecology Center
Maryland Pesticide Education Network
Mobius
New Roots, Inc.
Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Hampshire (NOFA-NH)
Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT)
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association
Ohio Women's Alliance
OVEC-Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition
PA Stands Up
Pittsburgh Food Policy Council
Progressive Democrats of America
Regeneration Massachusetts
Slow Food North Shore
The Greenbaum Foundation
United Vision for Idaho & United Action for Idaho
West Virginia Environmental Council
WV Citizen Action
350Kishwaukee
350NH