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Siddiqui Nomination as Chief Agricultural Negotiator in U.S. Trade Office Opposed by Center for Biological Diversity

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FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. Nov. 18, 2009 - Because of his loyalty to the pesticide and biotech industry, the Center for Biological Diversity opposes the nomination of Islam Siddiqui as chief agricultural negotiator in the Office of the United States Trade Representative. Dr. Siddiqui is a former pesticide lobbyist and is currently vice president of science and regulatory affairs at CropLife America, a biotech and pesticide trade group that lobbies to weaken environmental laws. The Center joins more than 80 environmental, small-farm, and organic groups that are asking the Senate to reject Siddiqui's nomination.

"After Dr. Siddiqui has worked for eight years to promote Big Agribusiness corporations such as Monsanto, DuPont, and Dow Chemical, it is undeniable that he is biased towards chemical and energy-intensive agricultural practices that undermine global food security, contribute to climate change, and imperil public health and wildlife" said Tierra Curry, biologist at the Center for Biological Diversity.

While at the USDA, Siddiqui oversaw the development of the first national organic labeling standards, which allowed sewage sludge-fertilized, genetically modified, and irradiated food to be labeled as organic before public outcry forced more stringent standards. The chief agricultural negotiator works in the U.S. trade representative's office on issues concerning U.S. farm exports. Siddiqui has derided the European Union's ban on hormone-treated beef and has vowed to pressure the European Union to accept more genetically modified crops.

CropLife America, formerly known as the National Agricultural Chemicals Association, lobbies to weaken the Endangered Species Act and the Clean Water Act, claiming that pesticides are not pollutants because of their intended beneficial effect and that pesticides positively impact endangered species. The group has lobbied to allow pesticides to be tested on children and to allow the continued use of persistent organic pollutants and ozone-depleting chemicals. It also launched a petition asking Michelle Obama to use pesticides in the organic White House garden and fought county initiatives in California banning genetically modified foods.

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