



THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE
WASHINGTON, D. C.
20250-0100

September 19, 2007

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President,

It has been a great honor to serve you and the American people as Secretary of Agriculture for nearly three years. After careful thought and difficult deliberation, I am writing to inform you that I have decided to pursue a new opportunity to serve this great Nation. Please accept my resignation effective today, September 19, 2007 and my gratitude for the distinct privilege to serve in your Cabinet.

Under your leadership and vision, American agriculture is stronger than ever before in history. Your presidency has had a profoundly positive impact on the lives of Americans in both rural and urban communities.

Farm equity, now at \$2 trillion, has increased \$200 billion per year for the past several years. The debt-to-asset ratio is the lowest in more than 45 years. Projected 2007 net cash income is a record high \$86 billion. The average farm household income is projected at \$81,500 this year, nearly \$20,000 above the average household income in the U.S. Overall farm balance sheets reveal a strong and growing farm economy.

Agricultural exports are expected to set a fourth consecutive record this year, with a projected value of \$79 billion. The strong stance you've taken with international leaders in relation to beef trade has led to the re-opening of more than 40 key markets to U.S. beef. This year, U.S. beef exports have increased 18 percent over last year and negotiations are underway to achieve additional market openings.

Your compassion toward the hungry is evidenced in the 70 percent increase in funding for USDA nutrition programs during your presidency. One million additional school children are being served lunch under our program; 700,000 women, infants and children have been added to the WIC program; and nine million additional low-income Americans are participating in the Food Stamp Program. One in five Americans is now touched by the nutrition safety net you have built.

The Honorable George W. Bush
Page Two

Because of your ambitious conservation goals, for the first time in living memory, America is gaining wetlands instead of losing them. Overall, you have more than doubled the number of acres enrolled in USDA conservation programs, now totaling a remarkable 184 million acres.

I also want to thank you for your direction related to the 2007 farm bill. Your suggestion to talk to as many farmers, ranchers and stakeholders as possible in developing the Administration's 2007 farm bill proposal proved very wise. As you know, their comments formed the foundation of our proposals, which focus our programs while providing unwavering commitment to U.S. agriculture. Nearly 200 newspaper editorials nationwide have applauded the Administration's vision. Several of our ideas are now part of the House-passed farm bill and my hope is that even will be adopted by the Senate.

I can assure you that I leave the farm bill finalization in supremely capable hands. Deputy Secretary Chuck Conner has been intimately involved in the deliberations – from the development of our proposals to his attendance at virtually every hearing during the House mark-up. Few people are as knowledgeable and insightful about farm bill policy. He is supported by some of the most dedicated civil servants in the federal government.

Mr. President, you should be very proud of the men and women of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. A cornerstone of your leadership is recognizing that people are our greatest resource. You have a gold mine at USDA. It has been my honor to work alongside them.

On a very personal note, I'd like to express my deepest gratitude for your confidence and support. For a farm boy from Iowa, this truly has been an opportunity of a lifetime. As I have often noted, I never dreamed of becoming Secretary of Agriculture as a child because it seemed so far removed from our 160-acre farm. I hope young people growing-up on farms and in rural communities today realize that no dream is too big in America.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Johanns", written in a cursive style.

Mike Johanns