

TESTIMONY OF EDWARD M. AVALOS
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

Chairman Lincoln, Ranking Member Chambliss, and Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. Also, I would like to thank Senator Bingaman for his kind words and for his efforts in representing the State of New Mexico. Also, I am extremely grateful to President Obama for nominating me and Secretary Vilsack for his support. With me today is my better half Anna Bee from Mesilla, NM, my daughter Alexandra and her fiancé Tom from Long Beach, California; my daughter Megan and her fiancé Mark, from Phoenix, Arizona; and my son and fishing and hunting buddy, Russell from Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Madam Chair, Members of the Committee, it is an honor to be nominated to serve as the Undersecretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The mission areas include the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and Grain Inspection Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA). Each of these agencies is extremely important and contributes to benefit the agricultural industry all the way from the producer, through the shipper, processor, retailer, and on to the consumer.

I grew up on a family farm in the Mesilla Valley of Southern New Mexico. At an early age, my parents, Adolfo and Eva Avalos, instilled a strong work ethic which I have followed throughout my professional life. My 30-plus years of experience in agricultural marketing have prepared me for my role as the Undersecretary. I have worked with the agriculture industry to address regulatory, marketing, production, and other issues and challenges in both the national and international arenas. I am a firm believer that the United States (U.S.) agricultural sector has been and continues to be the backbone of this country providing food and fiber to consumers and end users in the U.S. and also to markets all over the world.

During my career, I gained considerable experience in both the international and domestic arena. I have worked to support the production and marketing of livestock, specialty crops, and value-added products through the implementation of trade missions, dialog, and trade promotion.

Also, I've worked with diverse stakeholders to develop, establish and maintain markets for sheep, cattle, goats, and numerous fruits and vegetables in Mexico; onions and processed foods to Canada; and most recently, the pecan grower's success in creating an export market in China.

In the domestic arena, I have been successful in establishing markets for chile, onions, potatoes, watermelons, pumpkins, pecans, beans, and alfalfa. I have worked closely with producers to support the production of crops that the industry demands, with distributors for timely delivery of goods and with retailers to showcase, promote, sell, educate, and inform the consumer

utilizing brochures, recipes, and other promotional and educational tools.

In addition, I have worked to advance Indian agriculture, including working closely with the Navajo Agricultural Products Industry—an 85,000 acre farming enterprise located on the Navajo Nation in the four corners area of New Mexico and with some of the pueblos in Northern New Mexico to bring back traditional agriculture to their tribes.

I believe it is important to create an atmosphere of collaboration and foster good communication throughout agriculture production. I am enthusiastic about opportunities to promote fresh and local availability of products, more farmers markets, and better connecting the American public with their food supply.

As a result, I have established an effective and informative network of growers, shippers, trade organizations, and other stakeholders throughout the country. I've worked closely with the North American Agricultural Marketing Officials, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, and the Western United States Agricultural Trade Association. This network provides much needed input on issues and trends within the food, agricultural, and livestock industries.

If confirmed as undersecretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, I will emphasize providing oversight for the three agencies and addressing the concerns of agriculture boards and commissions. If confirmed, I look forward with enthusiasm to stimulating employee morale and working with the many fine public servants assigned to my area as well as with the other agencies at USDA. I am strongly committed to Civil Rights at the Department and will work hard to ensure USDA's employment practices will not tolerate any form of discrimination, but instead will create a positive environment that celebrates and draws upon the strength of USDA's diverse workforce and customer base.

If confirmed, I am committed and dedicated to working with Secretary Vilsack and this Committee to address and resolve the many concerns and difficult issues facing the food, agriculture, and livestock sectors in this country. Building on my experience with farmers, ranchers, dairymen, shippers, brokers, processors, distributors, retailers, and consumers, I will provide the leadership and guidance needed to implement the farm bill and carry out our mission at USDA.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to responding to your questions.