

During my service to you over the past two years my admiration for you and my respect for your extraordinary leadership and your exemplary human traits have only grown. These traits have all been vividly illustrated in the recent Persian Gulf crisis, which you have handled so admirably.

You have always encouraged your cabinet to pursue the challenges that most affect the American people. America's farmers have their share of challenges, but because of the groundwork laid by your market oriented policies, they are now better able to meet the future with optimism. You recognized the fundamental reforms needed in global agricultural trade when you asked me to serve as your Secretary of Agriculture. All of American agriculture is now poised to capitalize on these reforms when they come to fruition in the Uruguay Round and other negotiations. Mr. President, we are deeply grateful for your unwavering support in these efforts.

One of our major domestic accomplishments, achieved in cooperation with the Senate and House Agriculture Committees, was the 1990 Farm Bill, for it will guide our agricultural policies for the next 5 years. No farm bill in memory has been written under such complex circumstances. Not only was it necessary to project the needs of American agriculture over the ensuing 5 years, but we had to do so in the context of demanding budget realities, increasing global competition, heightened trade disputes, and the need for farmers to expand their roles as stewards of the environment. What emerged is not a perfect piece of legislation, but it is certainly a respectable work product that balances well innumerable sensitive and divergent interests.

The 1990 Farm Bill continues the market oriented approach of the 1985 Act through aggressive export assistance programs, increased research efforts, and added production flexibility for farmers. The new act also encourages tree plantings through your America the Beautiful initiative, and fosters our domestic food assistance programs that help so many needy Americans.

Reducing the federal budget deficit will bring benefits to all Americans, and particularly our nation's farmers. Although income supports will be reduced under the 1990

Deficit Control Act, our farmers will benefit greatly from the resulting lower interest rates and reduced inflation. In the long run they'll be better off, and so will future generations of farm families.

You have guided American foreign policy through two of the most tumultuous years in world history. The incredible changes in Eastern Europe have been fostered by your courageous and straight-forward approach, and we at USDA have pursued a facilitating role in the transition. From the day you asked that I lead a Presidential mission to Poland, we have sought to assist the region by providing the food, technical assistance, and training necessary to accomplish agricultural development and privatization.

On the home front, we have initiated an aggressive effort to expand opportunities for women, minorities and the disabled here at the Department of Agriculture. We now have in place a Workforce Diversity Program which will ensure that employees of the Department of Agriculture more closely reflect the composition of American society. And we've dramatically expanded our summer internship program for minority students.

From a managerial standpoint, we have developed and are implementing an Electronic Benefits Transfer Program which will improve the integrity and efficiency of our domestic food assistance programs, and we are upgrading our technology at the National Finance Center which services not only our payroll but many other agencies as well. We've become a lot more sophisticated everywhere these past 2 years.

Your Administration has faced a plethora of environmental challenges. Agriculture has been at the center of many of them, from wetlands to water quality, global change, and the protection of endangered species. We have sought to balance interests in this very sensitive area in a fair and rational way, and I believe we have done so.

Recognizing the economic and demographic hardships facing rural America, you created a Presidential Council on Rural Development. This Council met for the first time this week, and this group of outstanding leaders from business, government and academia will soon be providing you with