

# BACKGROUND ON SIDDIQUI AND CROPLIFE AMERICA

Siddiqui's own statements, combined with CropLife America's record on critical public policy issues, consistently show a clear bias of placing the interests of agribusiness above that of the public.

## **Siddiqui Denies the Valid Approach of the Precautionary Principle in Trade**

**Agreements.** As a CropLife America lobbyist in 2003, Siddiqui criticized the European Union's moratorium on imports of genetically modified crops and rejected their insistence on using the precautionary principle that lets nations protect their citizens and the environment when there are uncertainties or unknown risks associated with the introduction of GMOs. Siddiqui claimed the EU's moratorium had resulted in "denying food to starving people," a patently false statement.

The precautionary principle is widely recognized as one of the most important guiding principles of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It enables societies to protect human health and the global ecosystems upon which we depend, based on available evidence, *before harm is done*. Countries that have adopted the precautionary principle (i.e. Germany and Sweden), are now exporting environmentally sound technologies. Other countries, such as the United States, risk being left behind, reliant on obsolete, polluting facilities and technologies.

**Siddiqui Rejected Consumer Labeling of GMOs while at USDA.** As a special assistant for trade at USDA in 1999, Siddiqui opposed efforts by Japan to implement mandatory labeling of foods containing GMOs, saying it could mislead consumers about food safety and disrupt trade. "I fear major trade disruptions and increases in food costs to consumers if Japan requires mandatory labeling," Siddiqui said. In contrast to Siddiqui, we believe that the United States must respect other countries' right to inform their consumers of the content of the food they consume; this is not an "unfair" trade barrier, but constitutes simply "prior informed consent."

**Siddiqui Instrumental in Drafting First Proposed Organic Standards that Would Have Allowed Toxic Sludge, GMOs and Irradiated Food to be Labeled "Organic."** As Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs at USDA, Siddiqui oversaw the release of the first-ever proposed federal standards for organics, an accomplishment the White House has cited in support of his nomination. However, these rules created an uproar when USDA overruled recommendations of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) and permitted the use of GMOs, irradiation and toxic sludge under the organic label. Only after 230,000 comments flooded into USDA were these standards strengthened. It remains one of the highest outpourings of public sentiment on any government regulation in U.S. history. Siddiqui admitted that USDA had overruled the stances of the NOSB in the initial rules and cited the concern that banning GMOs in organics here in the United States would be "inconsistent" with the position of U.S. trade negotiators in forcing the European Union to accept GMOs.

**CROPLIFE AMERICA PLACES AGRIBUSINESS INTERESTS ABOVE PUBLIC INTEREST**

In addition to Siddiqui's statements, we believe his role as a former registered lobbyist on behalf of CropLife America and his current position as vice president of Science and Regulatory Affairs make him an inappropriate choice to be our chief trade negotiator for agriculture. CropLife America has consistently sought to achieve reductions/eliminations of tariff and non-tariff barriers on pesticides, arguing that regulations of pesticide use in the name of human health and other concerns violates international trade laws. In contrast, we believe our Chief Agricultural Negotiator must serve the public interest above narrow special interests. Pesticide regulations and oversight of genetically engineered food are critical in protecting public health and preserving the functioning of the global ecosystems on which human survival depends.

Other troubling positions that CropLife America has taken:

**Resistance to International Regulations of Persistent Organic Pollutants.** CropLife America has been a driving force to weaken the U.S. position on the Stockholm Convention, a critical effort to regulate the use of toxic "persistent organic pollutants (POPs)." These include the well known chemicals DDT, PCBs and dioxins that have been linked to a host of serious human health problems and environmental concerns. Even at very low levels of exposure, POPs can cause reproductive and developmental disorders, damage to the immune and nervous systems, and a range of cancers. CropLife America has argued that "American sovereignty" concerns should override the treaty if the chemical regulations are stronger than U.S. law. CropLife America explicitly calls for the U.S. to "protect export markets for American produce and farm commodities," even if they use chemicals that may be outlawed by the POP treaties.

CropLife America and its international counterpart CropLife International, whom Siddiqui has represented in international negotiations, have continuously argued for a legitimate role for the dangerous POP endosulfan. However in October 2009, scientists declared that: "endosulfan is likely, as a result of its long-range environmental transport, to lead to significant adverse human health and environmental effects, such that global action is warranted." The finding sets the stage for a global ban under the Stockholm Convention. Endosulfan is an endocrine disruptor, and low dose exposure while in the womb is linked to male reproductive harm, autism, and birth defects. High dose exposures are acutely toxic, resulting in headaches, nausea and vomiting, seizures, and in extreme cases, unconsciousness and death.

**CropLife America Supports Continued Use of Toxic Methyl Bromide Despite Global Ban.** Methyl bromide, a powerful ozone depleter used on strawberries, tomatoes, grapes and other crops, was in 1987 listed as one of the chemicals targeted for elimination under the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. It was to have been banned in industrialized countries in 2005, although the Bush Administration secured exemptions to allow for its use. The EPA has classified methyl bromide as a Toxicity Category I compound, the most deadly category of substances due to causing neurological damage and reproductive harm. Farmworkers in particular have experienced death, birth defects, blurred vision, nausea, and dizziness as a result of direct exposure to methyl bromide.

Methyl Bromide has also been listed as a Class I Ozone Depleter under the Clean Air Act. CropLife America has consistently supported the use of methyl bromide, claiming that "the continued exemptions are needed while research continues on the alternative pesticides." We

believe Siddiqui's background will place the interests of his former employer above that of human health and the environment.

**CropLife America Lobbied to Allow Children to be Used for Pesticide Experiments.** In August 2005, CropLife America met with Bush Administration officials at the Office of Management and Budget and EPA to allow children to participate in pesticide experiments. CropLife America urged certain allowances for chemical testing on children. Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility criticized the meeting for excluding the perspectives of ethicists, child advocates and scientists. EPA then adopted a human testing rule in line with CropLife America's suggestions. Environmental groups sued the EPA for failing to adequately protect women and children.

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