

Major associations from the U.S. produce industry have welcomed the confirmation of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.

The former Iowa governor will now hold the same Cabinet position he served for the entirety of the Obama administration. The Senate vote was 92-7.

Western Growers President & CEO Dave Puglia said the organization is pleased by the Senate confirmation on Feb. 23.

"Our work with him during his previous service as Secretary yielded positive policy actions for the fresh produce industry," he said.

"Looking ahead, we must band together to address short term, pandemic-related needs such as funding for worker safety costs, as well as larger and longer-term threats to the viability of farming in the West."

"Over the next four years, we know Secretary Vilsack will work with us as he has in the past to ensure economic prosperity for America's family farmers."

Produce Marketing Association (PMA) CEO Cathy Burns' congratulated Vilsack on the confirmation and this second opportunity to shape agriculture policy during the next four years.

"In his previous service as USDA's leader, PMA and its members enjoyed collaborating with Secretary Vilsack on a number of critical issues facing the fresh produce industry - ranging from including fresh fruits and vegetables in school feeding programs, increased SNAP benefits, and supporting various USDA committees with industry insight - and we look forward to future partnership with the Secretary and his team," she said.

"In light of our announcement on joining the steering committee of the Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance (FACA), we also look forward to working with Secretary Vilsack on devising meaningful incentives, science-based metrics, and durable policies for climate-smart agriculture that recognize unique aspects of the specialty crop industry."

United Fresh President and CEO Tom Stenzel also offered his congratulations, saying: Vilsack has "long been a friend of the fresh produce industry".

"On issues ranging from food and nutrition security to labor challenges in agriculture,, Secretary Vilsack has shown commitment to finding positive solutions," he said.

"We are particularly looking forward to working with Secretary Vilsack on a new Food Box program which has proved to be a critical step in providing healthy fresh fruits and vegetables to those in need, while supporting small farms and distributors around the country."

During his confirmation hearing earlier this month, Vilsack made clear the challenges facing the Department of Agriculture are different than 12 years ago.

"The world and our nation are different today than when I served as agriculture secretary in a previous administration," Vilsack said. "Today, the pandemic, racial justice and equity and climate change must be our priorities."