



February 4, 2010

**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

Gary Oppenheimer
AmpleHarvest.org

**Food and
Nutrition
Service**

**3101 Park
Center Drive**

**Alexandria, VA
22302-1500**

Dear Mr. Oppenheimer:

Thank you for your letter to Secretary Tom Vilsack regarding your organization, AmpleHarvest.org, and its efforts to diminish hunger in America. Your letter was referred to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), as we are responsible for the administration of the nutrition assistance programs for America's families and schoolchildren.

FNS' mission is to provide children and needy families better access to food and a more healthful diet through its food assistance programs and comprehensive nutrition education efforts. In addition to providing access to nutritious food, FNS also works to empower program participants with knowledge of the link between diet and health.

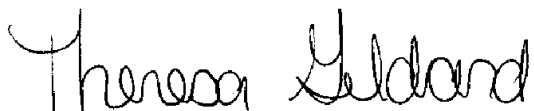
One way the Department of Agriculture is helping is through the Secretary's People's Garden initiative. Secretary Vilsack has challenged every USDA facility across the country and around the world to plant its own People's Garden. These People's Gardens will help illustrate the many ways USDA works to provide a sustainable, safe and nutritious food supply as well as protect and preserve the landscape where that food is produced. In People's Gardens where food is grown, the food will be donated to local charities, such as a food pantry.

Through your work at AmpleHarvest.org, local food pantries are connected with backyard gardeners. This partnership ensures that families who visit food pantries have access to fresh fruits and vegetables, while at the same time making sure that food grown in backyard gardens across America is not wasted. USDA supports the efforts of AmpleHarvest.org to end hunger in America and to improve access to nutritious, fresh produce for many low-income families.

Mr. Gary Oppenheimer
Page 2

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service is committed to reducing hunger and improving access to nutritious foods for low-income Americans. We commend your dedication to this goal and thank you for helping to ensure that needy Americans are able to feed their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Theresa Geldard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T'.

Theresa Geldard
Program Analyst
Food Distribution Division