

## **US Senator Tom Udall's message read at event by Michele Jacquez-Ortiz**

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you as part of the official kick-off for this important national gathering on food, farming, fertility, financing and most importantly, our future sustainability. The topics you will be discussing during the next few days are among the most pressing issues of our time.

As a member of the United States Senate, I just spent the August recess hosting town hall meetings in communities throughout New Mexico. There were three areas of concern that I heard over and over again--- health care, the economy, and global climate change.

If your conference only addressed one of these issues, that would be impressive. But the work you are doing here addresses all three.

Your participation in this conference is premised on the understanding that mankind's impact on the environment and the danger of bending nature to human design, are not necessarily in our best interest.

In just a few minutes, you will hear from Woody Tasch, author of [Inquiries Into the Nature of Slow Money](#). In his book, he states: It is a struggle to keep culture in agriculture. In the past half-century, we have slipped into a food system that treats the soil as if it were nothing more than a medium for holding plant roots so that they can be force-fed a chemical diet... We must now set about the work of rebuilding healthy relationships among enterprises, communities and bioregions, and between investors and the enterprises in which they invest.”

Tasch's words remind me of something Aldo Leopold once shared: "We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect."

This undeniable connection between food, soil and capital deserves a great deal of focused and thoughtful deliberation.

You understand that by growing food locally, and investing from the Ground Up, we boost our local economy, we reduce energy consumption and our carbon footprint, we revitalize our soil, we detoxify our food supply and we pass onto our children a healthier planet.

A special note of thanks to the organizers and sponsors of this inaugural conference, and to all of you, who are here as participants.

I look forward to hearing the creative ideas that come out of this week's conference and continuing our work together.

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